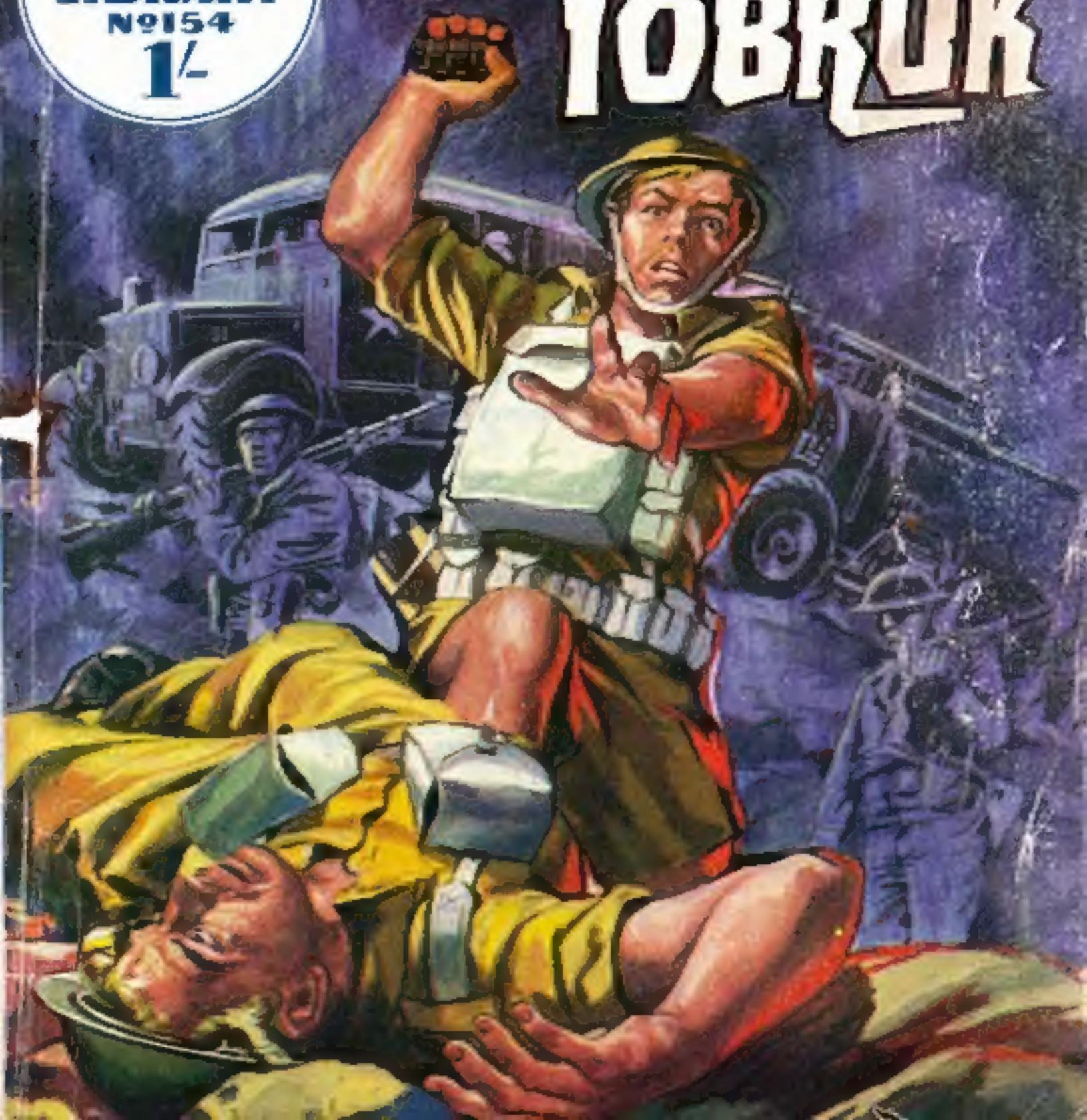


A  
FLEETWAY  
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# ROAD from TOBRUK



**LOOK!**  
THESE  
TWO  
TERRIFIC  
ISSUES  
**NOW  
ON  
SALE**



**Rebel  
Boarders**



**MAKE SURE—Get your copies—today!**



**TORPEDO  
RUN**



**WAR  
AT SEA  
PICTURE  
LIBRARY**



# Road from *TOBRUK*



SOME FIGHTING MEN ARE BORN WITH THE  
QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP; OTHERS  
GAIN THEM THROUGH SOUND TRAINING,  
OTHERS FIND THEM THROUGH FEAR. BUT IN  
THE STRANGE CASE OF GUNNER HARRY  
HOPWOOD, IT HAPPENED IN NONE OF THESE  
WAYS

# Chapter 1. *The Death Blow!*

JUNE 1942. THROUGH THE HOSTILE WATERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN A BRITISH MINESWEEPER WEAVED AN ERRATIC COURSE IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO EVADE THE ATTACKS OF TWO NAZI JUNKERS EIGHTY-EIGHT BOMBERS



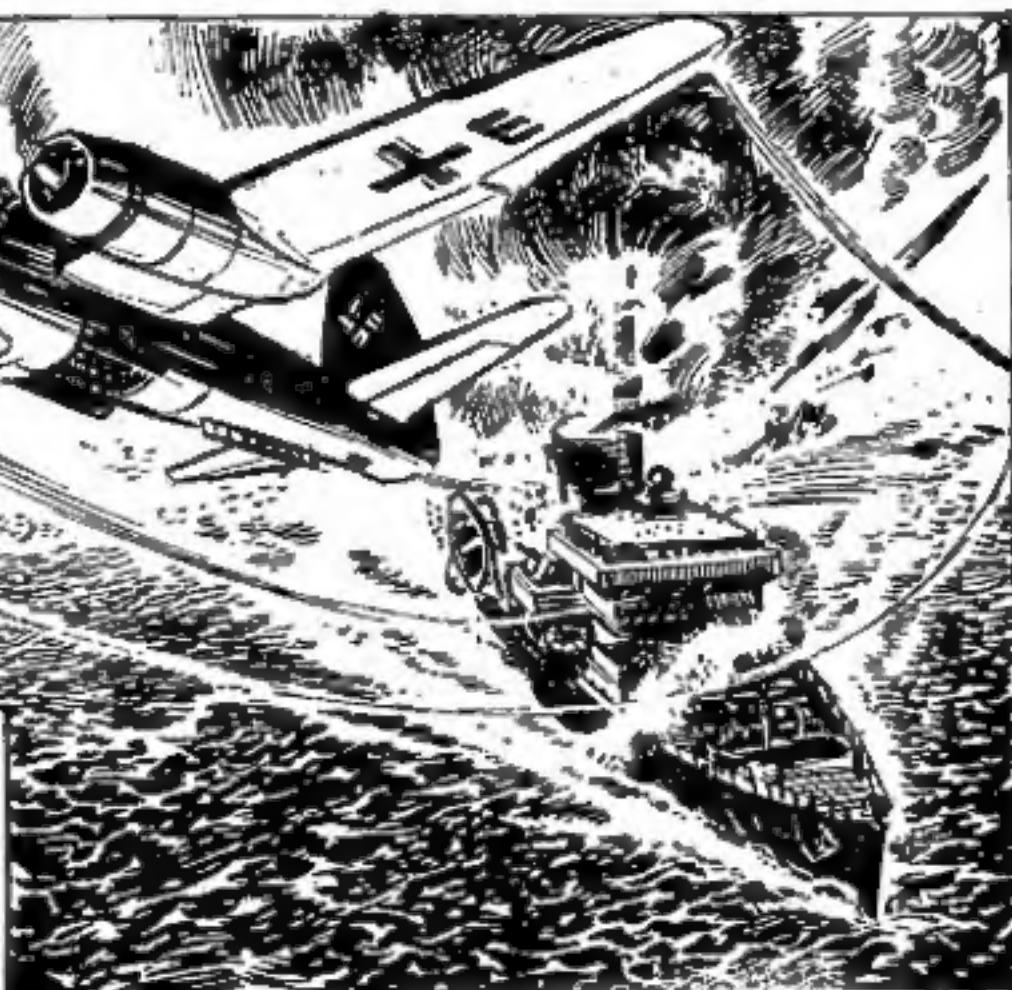
LIKE GREAT BLACK BIRDS OF PREY THE BOMBERS SWEEPED DOWN AGAIN ON THEIR QUARRY. THE SHIP'S OERLIKON GUNNERS HAD NO CHANCE TO REST... THEY WERE THE MINESWEEPER'S SOLE DEFENCE AGAINST AIR ATTACK.



THE GUNS LEAPT INTO LIFE, POUNDING SHELL AFTER SHELL AT THE FIRST NAZI BOMBER.



A FINAL CHORUS STAMMERED FROM THE GUNS BEFORE A STICK OF BOMBS FELL ATHWART THE SHIP. A BLINDING FLASH OF FLAME AND JAGGED METAL Erupted FROM THE AFT DECK-HOUSE . . .



PLUNGED OFF HIS FEET BY THE STUNNING FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER MASH, SKIPPER OF THE MINESWEEPER, TULLED HIMSELF UPRIGHT AND MADE A QUICK ESTIMATE OF THE DAMAGE

DIRECT HIT ON THE OERLIKON, MISTER CLARKE. ALTER COURSE TO ONE-ON-EIGHTY! THAT OTHER PLANE'LL BE ALONG TO FINISH US OFF ANY MOMENT!

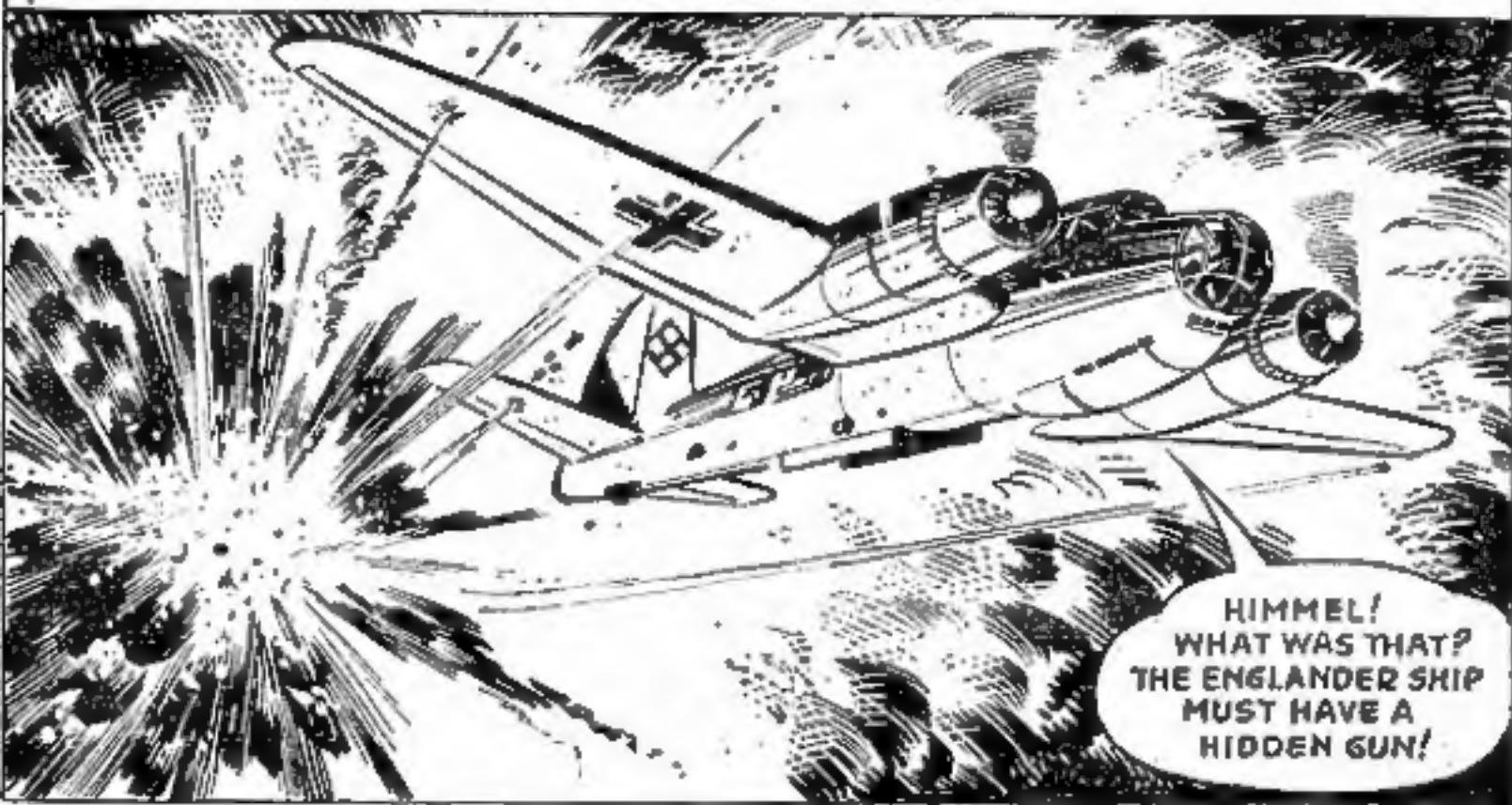


DEFENCELESS, THE SHIP SWUNG ON A FRANTIC EVACTION COURSE. BUT THE BOMB-AIMER OF THE SECOND JUNKERS MEANT TO MAKE NO MISTAKES

STEADY, ERNST. THEY HAVE NO GUNS TO FIGHT BACK. LET US MAKE CERTAIN... WE WILL BLOW HER OUT OF THE WATER!



SUDDENLY, WITH A CRACK THAT RENT THE SKIES, A SHELL BURST CLOSE TO THE NAZI PLANE. SHELL SPLINTER TORE A RAGGED GASH IN THE BLACK FUSELAGE. IT WAS LIKE A BOLT FROM THE BLUE TO THE GERMAN CREW!



DUMFOUNDED, THE CREW OF THE MINESWEEPER  
WATCHED AS THE JUNKERS BANKED SWIFTLY  
AND MADE OFF

I CAN'T  
BELIEVE IT,  
SIR... THERE  
WAS AN EXPLOSION,  
AND HOW THE JERRY'S  
SHEERING OFF!

IT  
LOOKED LIKE A  
SHELL-BURST TO ME,  
MISTER CLARKE...



## Road from Tobruk

NEXT MOMENT, THE SHIP'S LOOKOUT PROVIDED AN ASTOUNDING ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE OF THE MYSTERIOUS SHELL-BURST

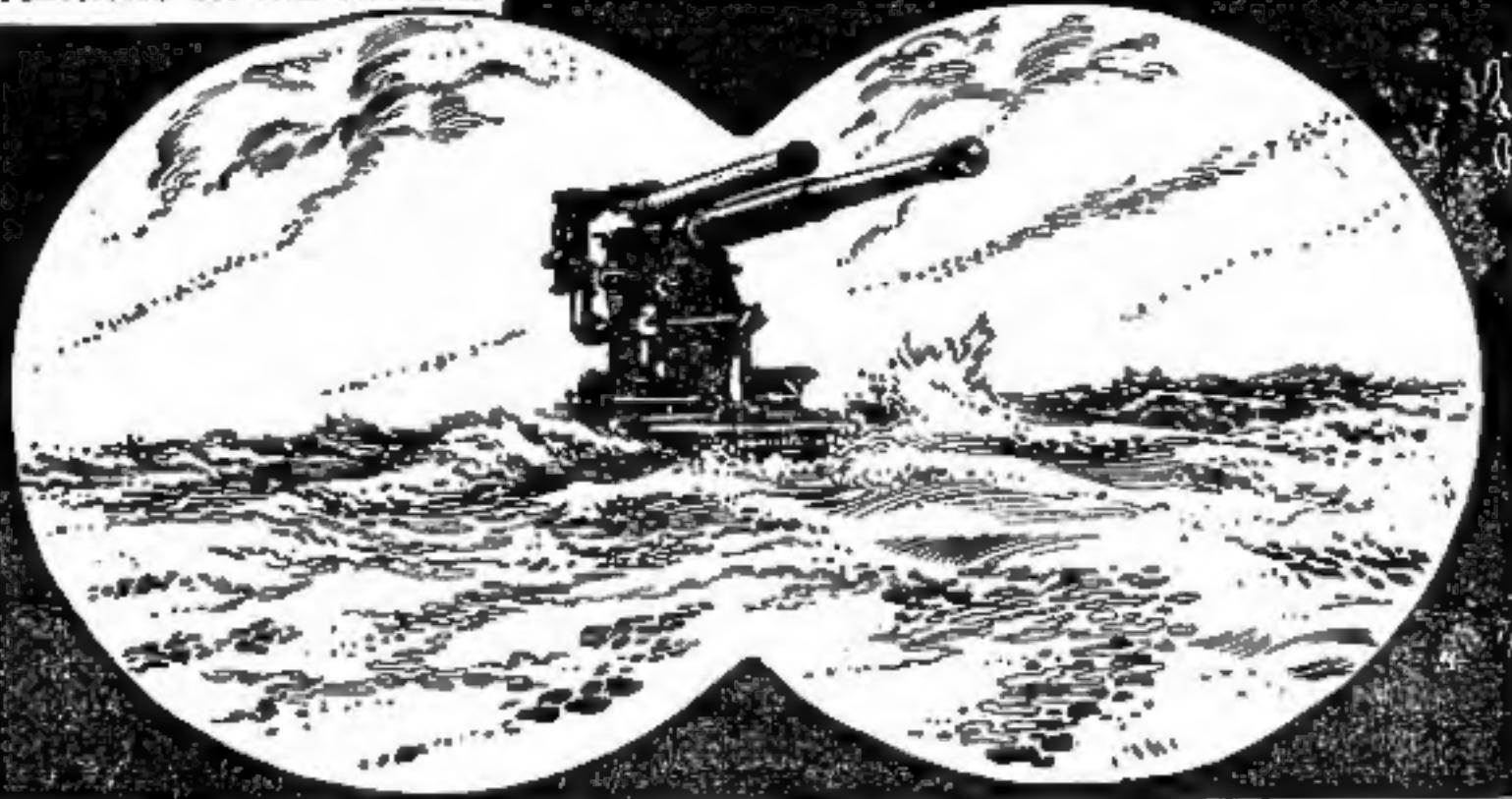


LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER NASH LEVELLED HIS GLASSES AT THE SEEMINGLY EMPTY MILES OF SEA AHEAD OF THE SHIP.



WE MUST BE SEEING THINGS, SIR!

EVEN SO, NEITHER COULD DENY WHAT THEY SAW . . . AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN  
FLOATING ON THE WATER.



ALTERING COURSE, THE SHIP RACED TOWARDS THE STRANGE OBJECT. NASH SAW THAT THE GUN WAS LASHED TO A COUPLE OF BOOM DEFENCE FLOATS. THEN HE SAW SOMETHING EVEN MORE UNBELIEVABLE . . .



WITH A WEIRD SENSE OF THE UNNATURAL, NASH SWUNG ROUND TO HIS FIRST OFFICER . . .

CAN WE HAVE FIRED THAT ROUND? PUT A BOAT OUT, NUMBER ONE.

AYE AYE, SIR!

WATCHED BY A SILENT AUDIENCE AT THE MINESWEEPER'S RAILS, THE SHIP'S LONGBOAT CAUTIOUSLY CLOSED WITH THE FLOATING ACK-ACK GUN.

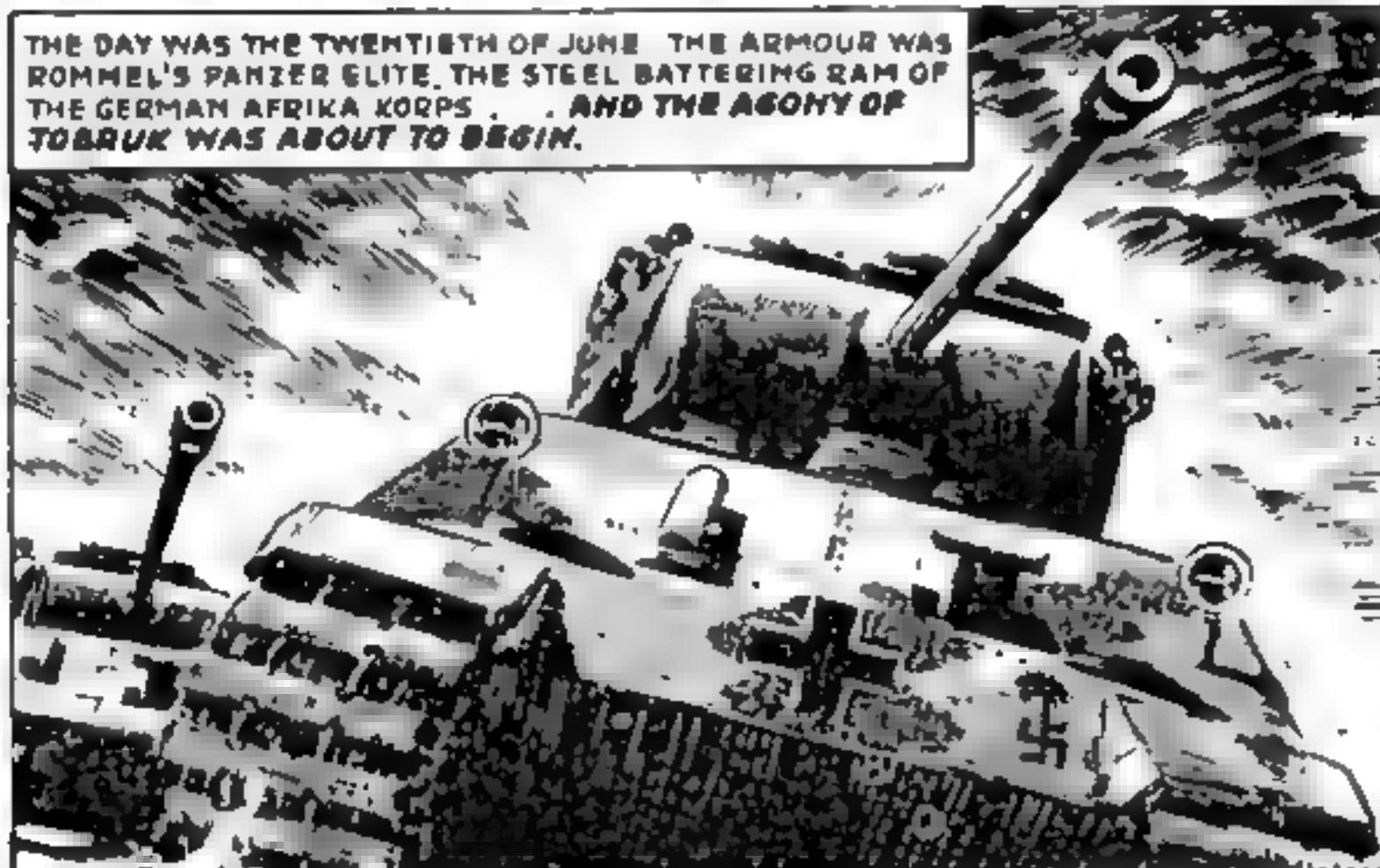
STILL NO MOVEMENT CAME FROM THE LONE, SEA-SOAKED FIGURE AT THE FOOT OF THE GUN. WAS HE DEAD? AND HOW HAD HE EVER COME TO BE IN SUCH A PLIGHT?

# Road from Tobruk

TO FIND THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, WE HAVE TO GO BACK SEVEN DAYS . . . TO A FATEFUL DAWN WHEN A HOST OF LEATHER-JACKETED FIGURES ROSE UP FROM THE EARLY SHADOWS AND CLIMBED INTO THEIR WAITING ARMOUR



THE DAY WAS THE TWENTIETH OF JUNE. THE ARMOUR WAS ROMMEL'S PANZER ELITE, THE STEEL BATTERING RAM OF THE GERMAN AFRIKA KORPS . . . AND THE AGONY OF TOBRUK WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN.



## Road from Tobruk

ALLIED DEFENDERS AT THE PERIMETER WIRES SAW THE DESERT MIST TURN TO A ROSY DAWN. SUDDENLY, WITH SPINE-CHILLING ABRUPTNESS, THE ENEMY APPEARED . . .

TANKS! JERRY TANKS!

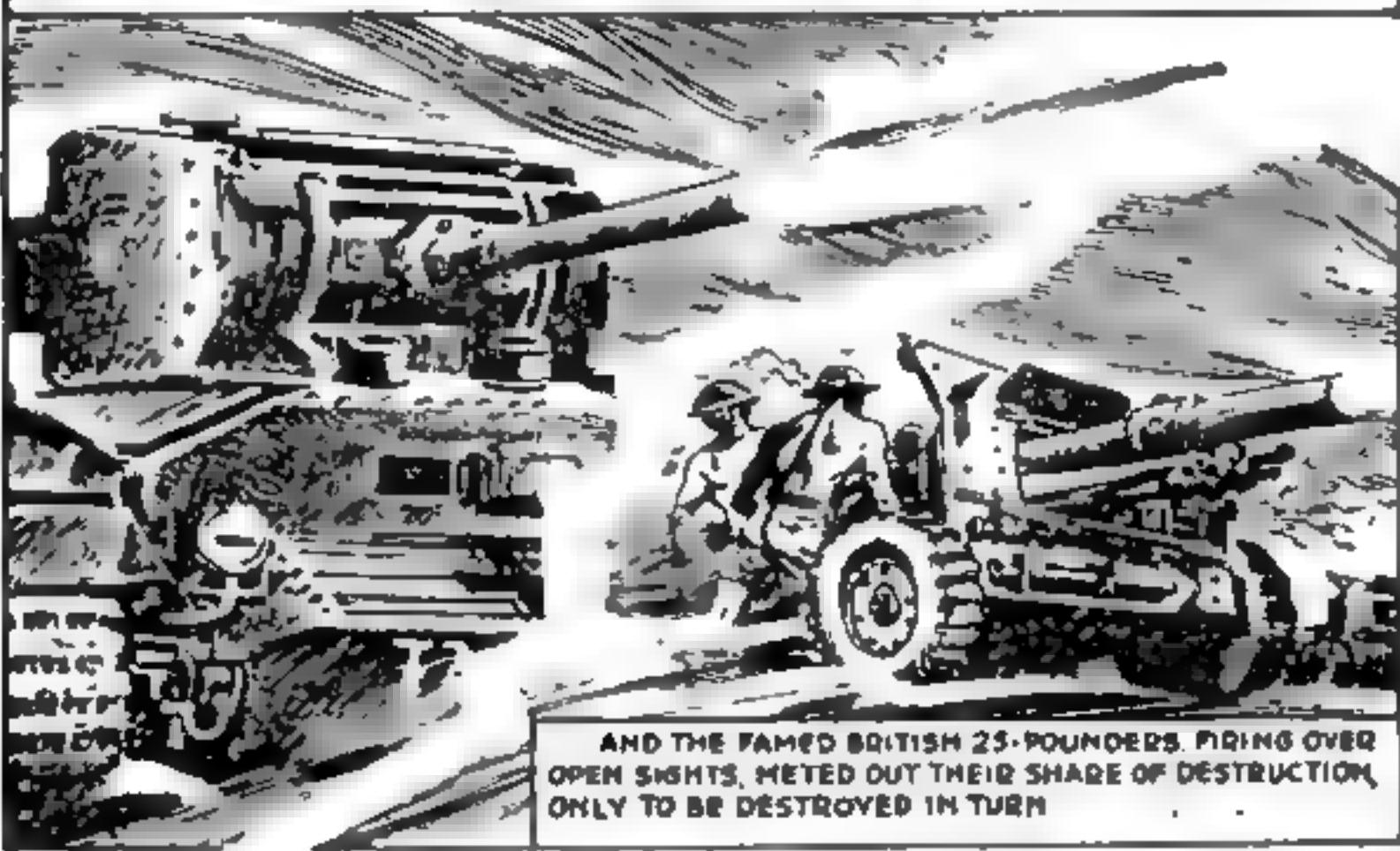


THE SUN CLIMBED, AND WITH IT ROSE THE HEAT, DUST, AND EAR-SPLITTING FURY OF ANOTHER CLASH WITH A FEROCIOUS ENEMY. BUT THIS TIME, DISMAY STRUCK AT THE DEFENDERS' GALLANT HEARTS . . .

WE'RE BEING OVERRUN, SIR!



ALLIED TANKS FOUGHT TO STEM THE ENEMY'S SURGING FLOOD OF MEN AND ARMOUR . . .



AND THE FAMED BRITISH 25-POUNDERS, FIRING OVER OPEN SIGHTS, METED OUT THEIR SHARE OF DESTRUCTION, ONLY TO BE DESTROYED IN TURN

ENEMY STUKA DIVE-BOMBERS ATTACKED THE HARBOUR, THEIR SMALL WHINE ADDING TO THE BARKING ROAR OF THE ARTILLERY DUELS.

"OK OUT!"



HIS BOMBS SPENT, THE STUKA LEADER TURNED WITH COLD HATRED UPON HIS OLD ENEMIES . . . THE BRITISH ANTI AIRCRAFT GUNS DEFENDING THE HARBOUR . . .



SCORNING THE SHELL BURSTS, THE NAZI PILOT PICKED ON A GUN AT THE MIERHEAD AND DIVED TOWARDS IT. THE GUN'S RINGSIGHT ENCIRLED THE ONCOMING PLANE . . .



THE PILOT SLUMPED OVER HIS CONTROLS AND THE SHATTERED PLANE SPUN DIZIALLY TOWARDS THE WATER . . .



THE PIERHEAD GUN TEAM PAUSED TO STARE WITH BATTLE-MAROURED EYES AT THE SPOT WHERE THEIR FOE HAD HIT THE HARBOUR WATER AND PLUNGED BEHNEATH THE SURFACE



THE SKY SUDDENLY CLEARED AND THE MEN OF NUMBER THREE GUN TEAM HAD A CHANCE TO RELAX AND KICK ASIDE THE EMPTY SHELL CASES



FROM THE PERIMETER DEFENCES CAME THE RAGGED THUNDER OF GUNS BUT THAT SOUND HAD BECOME FAMILIAR TO THEM.

GUNNER HARRY HOPWOOD BEGAN CLEANING THE SMOKING BREECH. "HEFTY" HOPWOOD, THEY JOKINGLY CALLED THE DIMINUTIVE, EIGHT-STONE-SEVEN GUNNER . . .



SINCE HE HAD JOINED THE CREW, IT HAD BEEN HEFTY HOPWOOD'S PASSION TO KEEP "LUCY," THE GUN, CLEAN AND PIN-BRIGHT. . .



THE OTHERS LOOKED AT HEFTY WITH FAINT DERISION. NO ONE HAD MUCH TIME FOR HIM . . . HE KEPT TOO MUCH TO HIMSELF.

MID-MORNING, THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE HAD GROWN OMINOUSLY LOUDER. SUDDENLY, CAPTAIN SELLERS ARRIVED . . .



GINGER-HAIRED SERGEANT KELLY CAME UP AT THE DOUBLE, HIS RUGGED FACE EVEN MORE GRANITE LIKE UNDER THE STRESS OF EVENTS . . .

ORDER'S COME THROUGH, SIR, TO DESTROY ALL VEHICLES.

HOT US, SERGEANT! IF THINGS GET TIGHT, WELL MOVE OUT . . . HAVE THE TRUCKS READY.



HEFTY HOPWOOD LOOKED AT CAPTAIN SELLERS WITH OPEN ADMIRATION. IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN HIS SECRET, BUT FORLORN AMBITION TO BE ASSERTIVE AND COMMANDING.



NEXT MOMENT, FRESH WAVES OF STUKAS ROARED DOWN UPON THE HARBOUR. ONCE AGAIN, IT WAS THE FEW REMAINING SHIPS, STRUGGLING TO GET CLEAR, THAT SUFFERED . . .

## Road from Tobruk

LONG USED TO THIS TYPE OF ATTACK, THE ACK-ACK GUN-TEAMS FEED THEIR GUNS WITH CALM PRECISION AND MARKED THE SKY WITH DEADLY SHELL-BURSTS.

LEFT! LEFT!



BUT BY MOON, EVEN THE HARD BOILED TEAM OF NUMBER THREE GUN WERE NOT PREPARED FOR THE SIGHT THAT NOW LOOMED BEFORE THEM . . .

COR JERRY TANKS!

GOOD GRIEF!  
IT CAN'T BE!



AT THE WHIPCRACK OF CAPTAIN SELLERS' VOICE, THE GUNNERS LOWERED LUCY'S SLEEK MUZZLE UNTIL IT WAS LEVELLLED POINT-BLANK AT THE SANDBAGS . . .



ONE SHELL BLASTED THE SANDBAGS ASIDE IN A WELTER OF FLAME AND SMOKE . . .

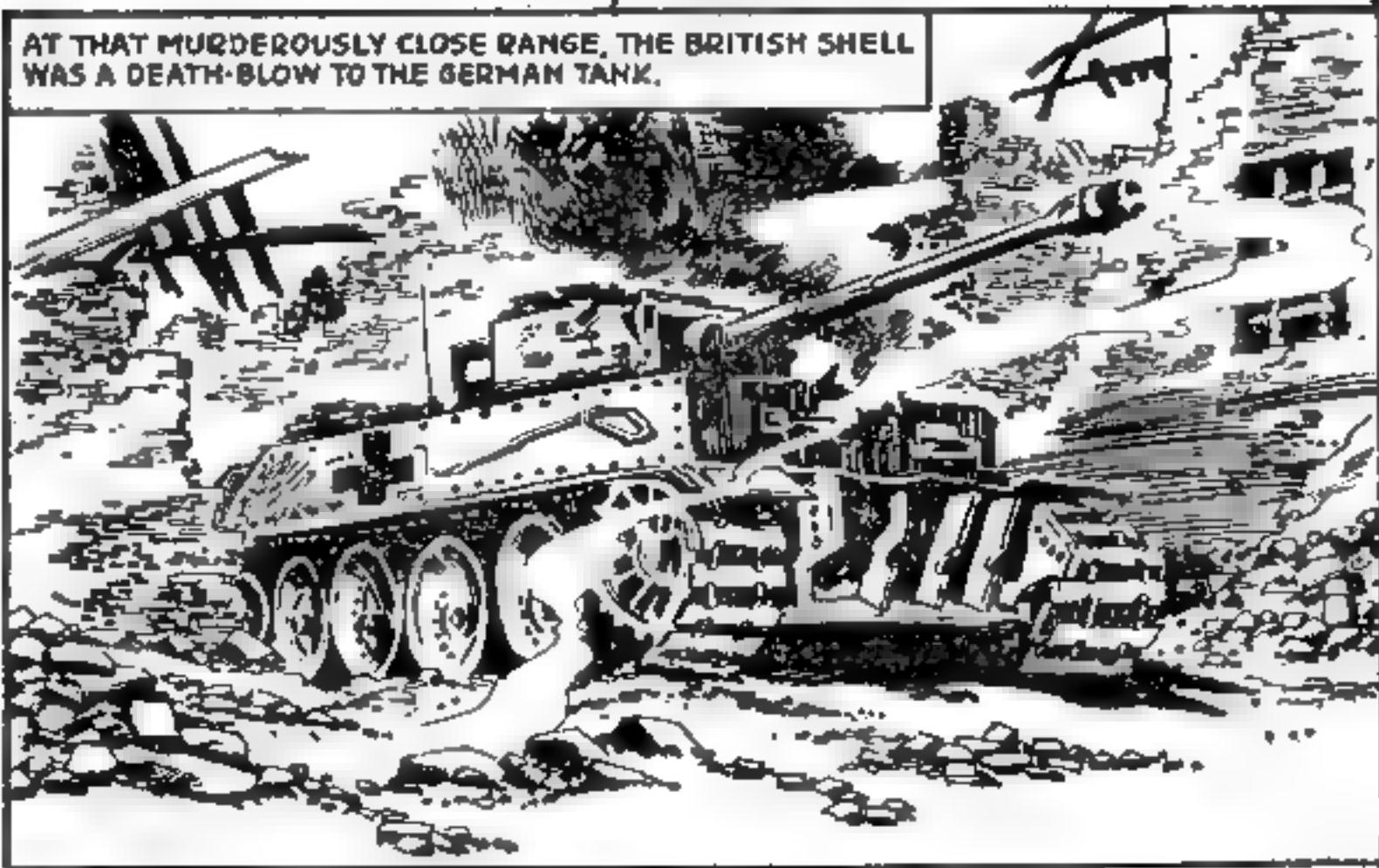


HOW LUCY FACED THE LEADING GERMAN TANK . . . BUT THE GERMAN TANK COMMANDER WAS QUICK . . . BOTH GUNS FIRED TOGETHER!



## Road from Tobruk

AT THAT MURDEROUSLY CLOSE RANGE, THE BRITISH SHELL  
WAS A DEATH-BLOW TO THE GERMAN TANK.



BUT WITH ITS FINAL SHOT, THE TANK HAD WREAKED  
REVENGE UPON THE GUN-CREW. IT WAS HARRY  
HOPWOOD WHO BROKE THE NEWS TO SERGEANT  
KELLY . . .

ALL RIGHT,  
HOPWOOD...  
LET'S TAKE A  
LOOK.

IT'S CAPTAIN  
SELLERS, SARGE...  
HE'S IN A BAD WAY.



SELLERS WAS UNCONSCIOUS, SO KELLY TOOK OVER COMMAND. EVEN AT THAT DIRE MOMENT, HEFTY HOPWOOD ENVIED THE SERGEANT HIS SELF-RELIANCE . . .

THERE'S A SHIP LEAVING THE QUAY, HOPWOOD, TELL THEM TO WAIT. THEY CAN TAKE CAPTAIN SELLERS ABOARD.

YES, SARGE.



HEFTY ARRIVED PANTING AT THE NEARBY QUAY, WAVING AND SHOUTING FOR ATTENTION.

HI, WAIT... WAIT!



BUT IN THEIR FRANTIC EFFORTS TO GET CLEAR OF THE BOMB-BLASTED HARBOUR, THE SAILORS WERE NOT IMPRESSED . . . AND HARRY HOPWOOD KNEW IT.

STOP!

TAKE NO NOTICE, HOBBO. IT'S ONLY A PINT-SIZE PONGO.



## Road from Tobruk

SHAMEFACED, THE LITTLE GUNNER RETURNED TO STAND DUMBLY MISERABLE, WHILE SERGEANT KELLY'S TONGUE LASHED HIM.

THE SHIP'S GONE?...  
OF COURSE IT'S GONE,  
IF YOU LET IT!

WELL, I...  
I...



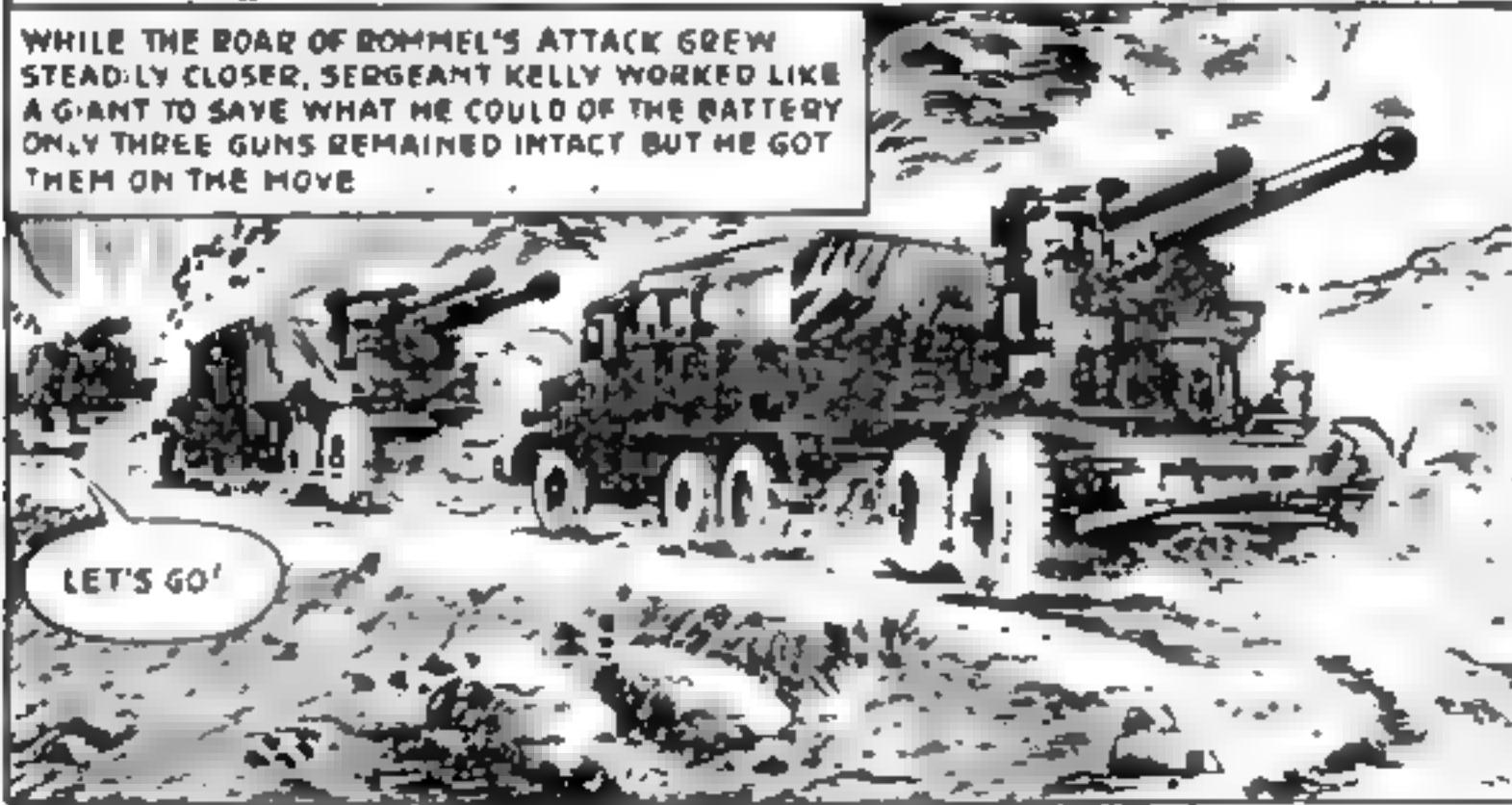
BUT HEFTY'S STAMMERING EXCUSES WERE CUT SHORT

WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE  
THE CAPTAIN AT THE  
DRESSING STATION. EIGHT...  
WE'RE CLEARING OUT  
OF THIS HOLE!



## Chapter 2. *Sands of Anguish*

WHILE THE ROAR OF ROMMEL'S ATTACK GREW STEADILY CLOSER, SERGEANT KELLY WORKED LIKE A GIANT TO SAVE WHAT HE COULD OF THE BATTERY. ONLY THREE GUNS REMAINED INTACT BUT HE GOT THEM ON THE MOVE.



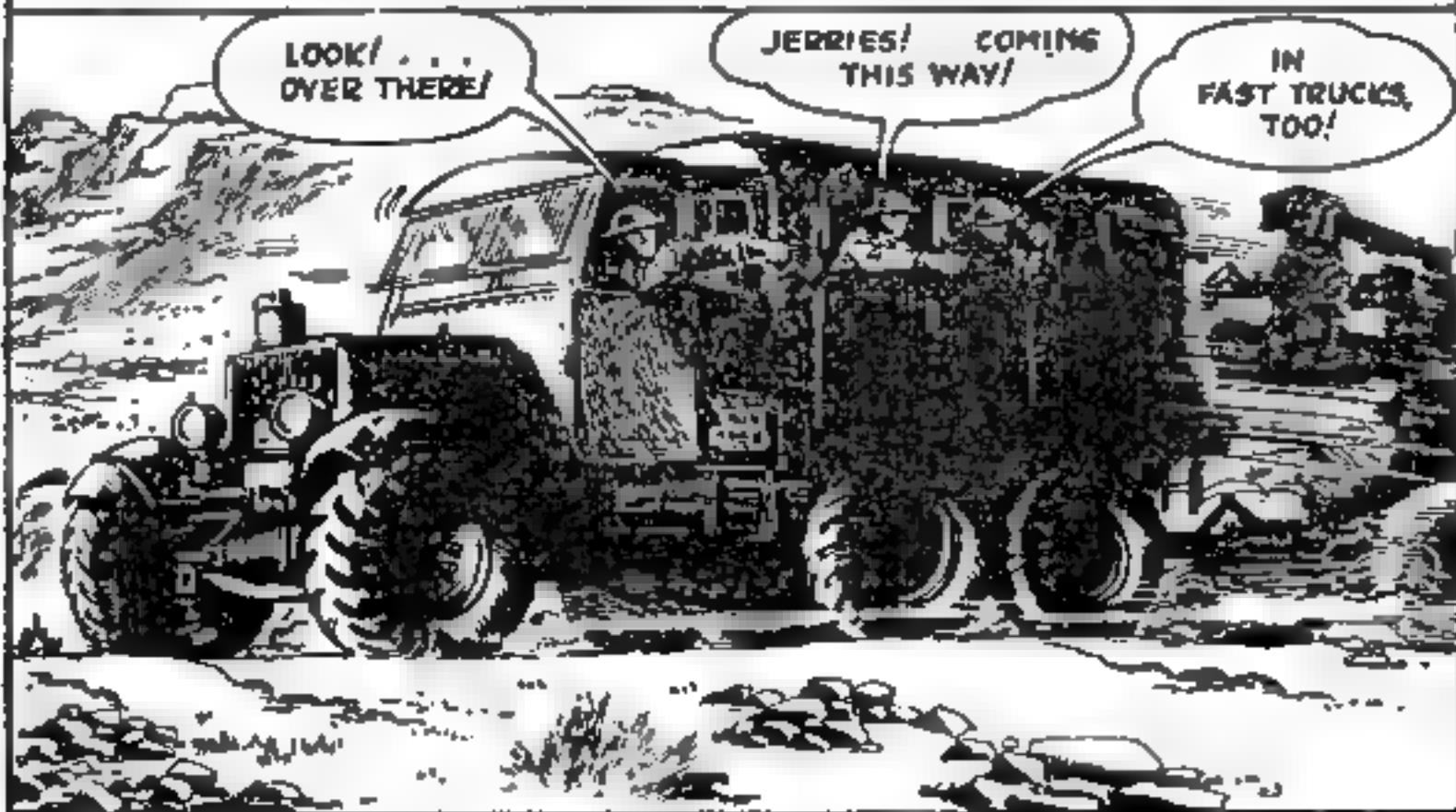
SOMEHOW THEY FOUND THE BARDIA ROAD, LEADING EAST FROM TOBRUK. WRECKAGE LITTERED THE WAY AND OVERHEAD SCREAMED THE STUKAS. THIS WAS WAR SAVAGE AND MERCILESS.

KEEP  
MOVING!



## Road from Tobruk

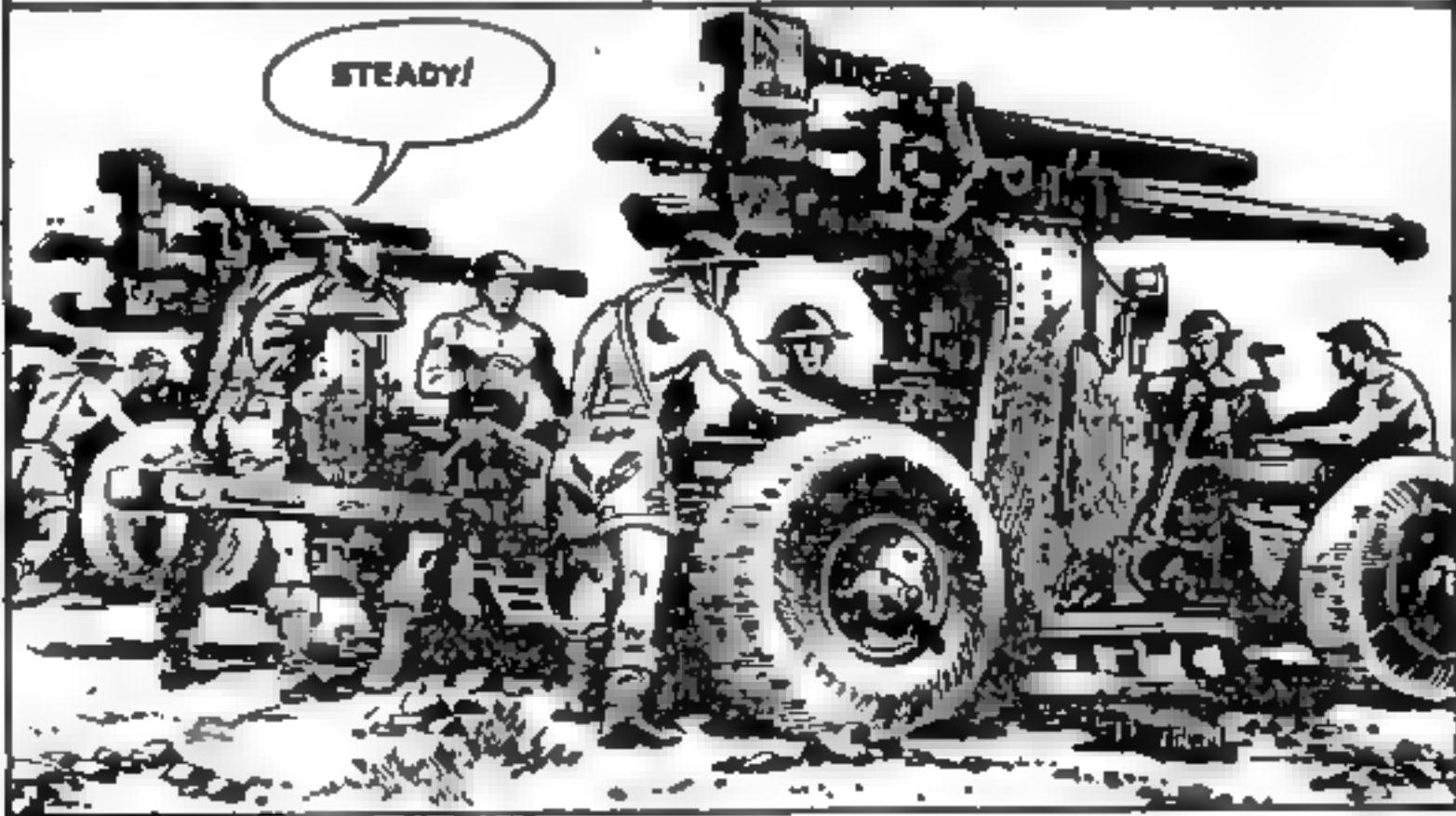
CRASHING ON WITH THEIR GUNS IN TOW, THEY BURST THROUGH THE OUTER DEFENCES AND SO INTO THE DESERT. ALL SEEMED WELL FOR SOME MILES, UNTIL . . .



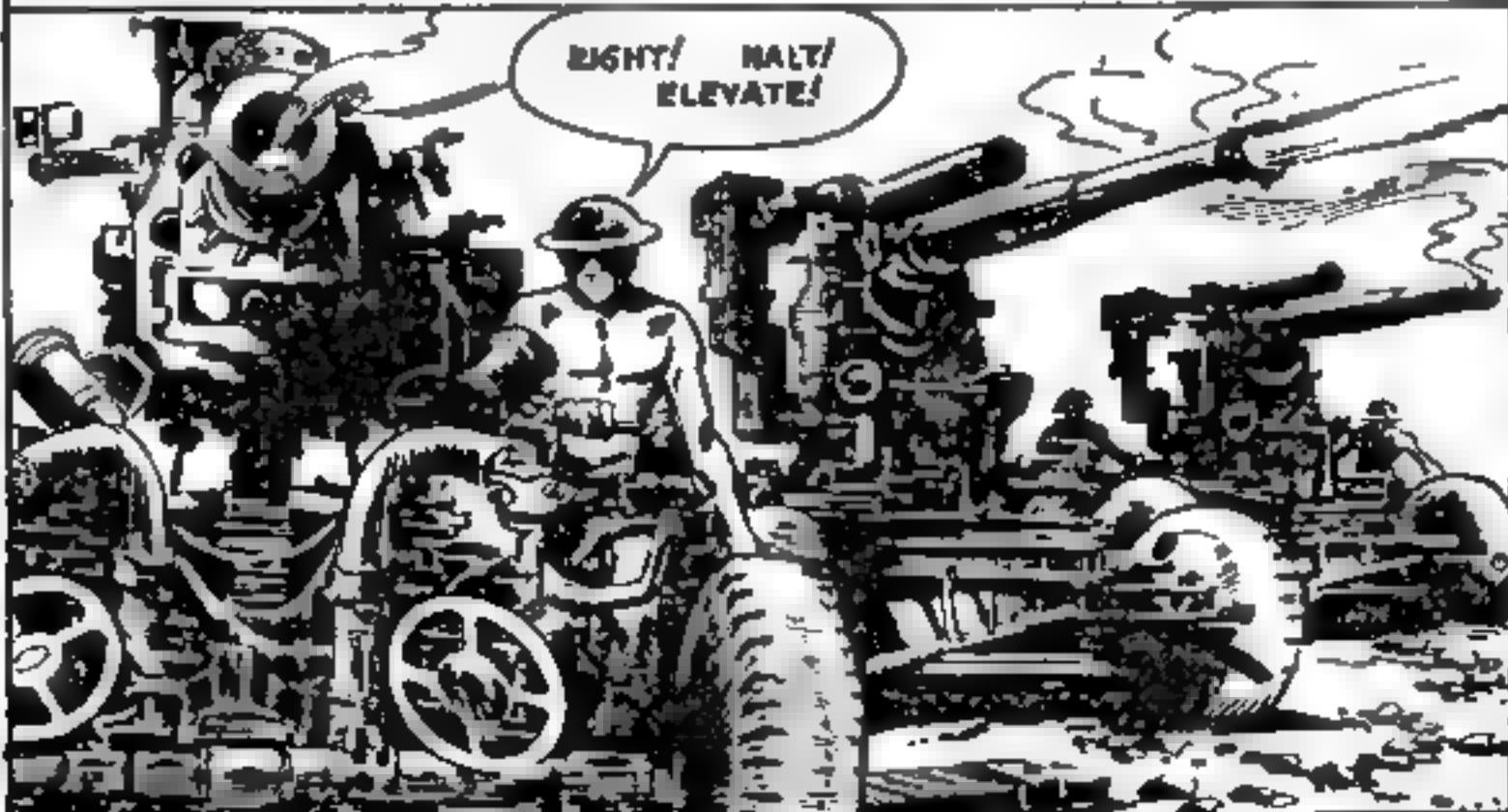
WITH THE WHINE OF FOUR GERMAN INFANTRY TRUCKS IN HIS EARS, SERGEANT KELLY KNEW THEY HAD BUT ONE HOPE OF SURVIVING . . .



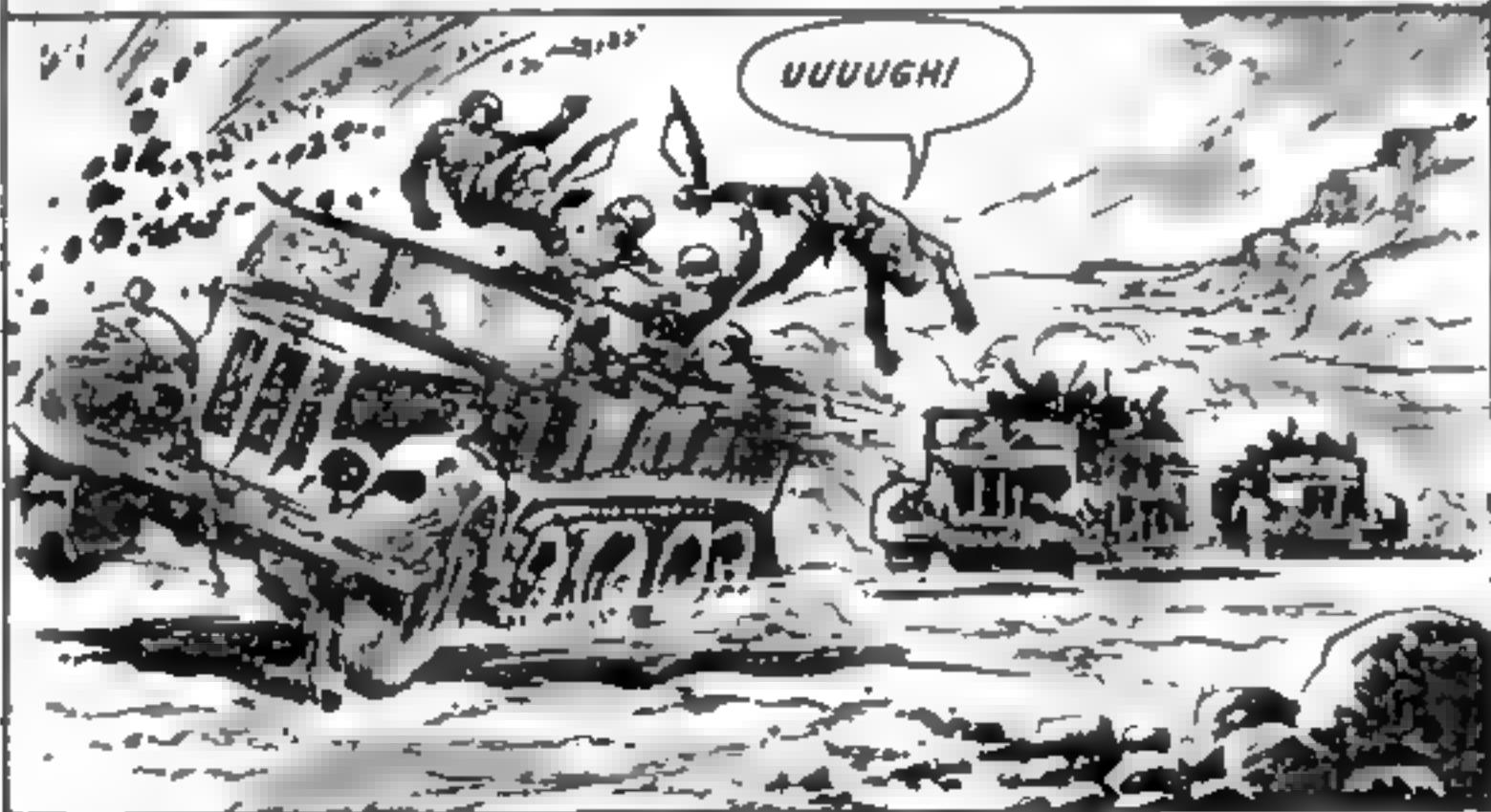
AT LAST THEY WERE READY, PANTING FROM THE EFFORT, THEIR EYES SQUINTING THROUGH THE HEAT HAZE. EVERY GUN BRECH CRADLED A WAITING SHELL . . .



A STENTORIAN ROAR FROM KELLY AND THE FEARFUL BARRAGE BEGAN. HARRY HOPWOOD SAW THE COUGHING SPOUTS OF SAND AS THEIR SHELL-BURSTS CREPT TO MEET THE ONCOMING ENEMY . . .



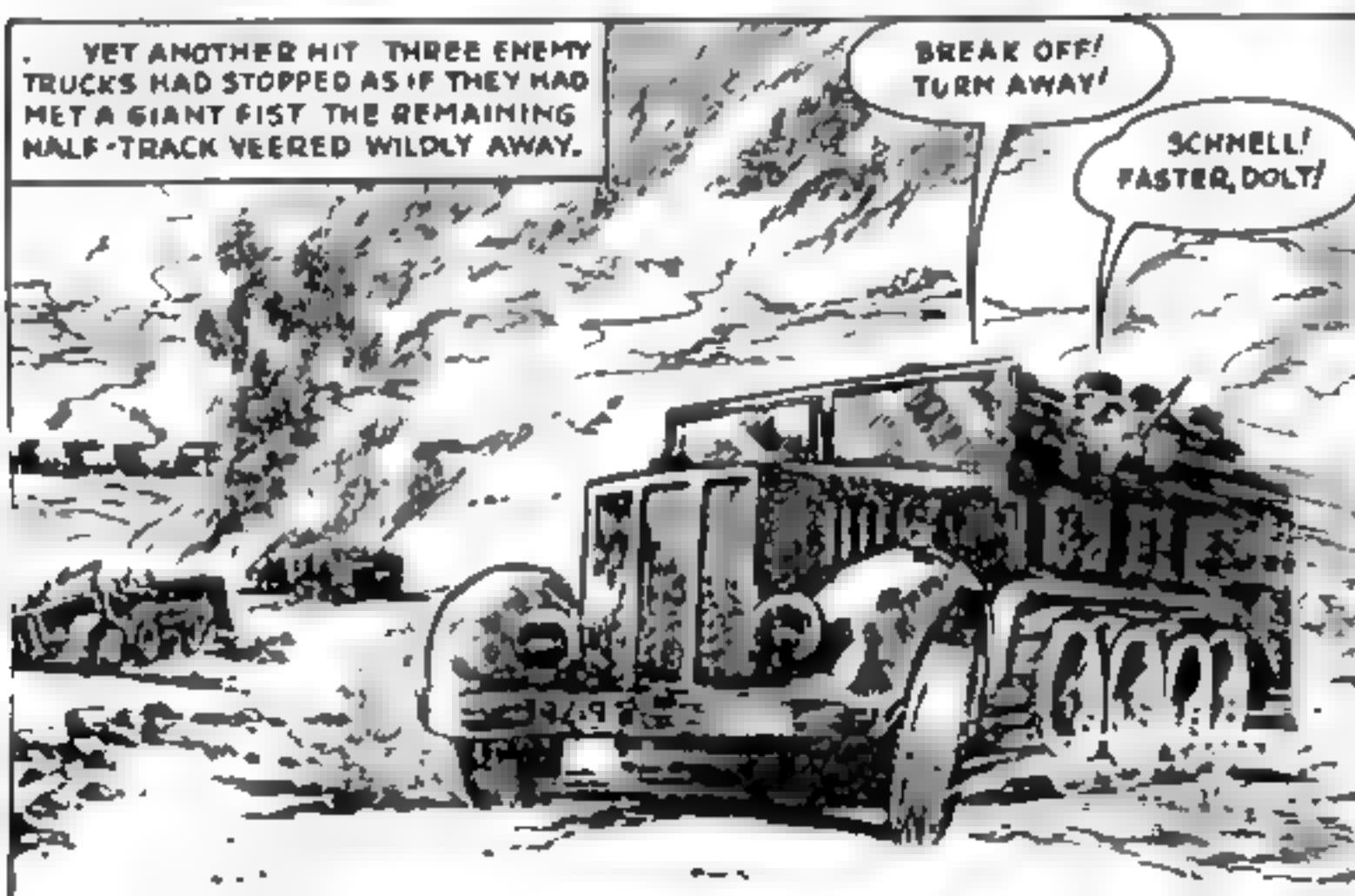
THE THREE BRITISH GUNS FIRED A HUDDEROUS SALVO OF HIGH-EXPLOSIVE ONE DIRECT HIT WAS FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER



YET ANOTHER HIT. THREE ENEMY TRUCKS HAD STOPPED AS IF THEY HAD MET A GIANT FIST. THE REMAINING HALF-TRACK VEERED WILDLY AWAY.

BREAK OFF!  
TURN AWAY!

SCHNELL!  
FASTER, DOLT!



THE ACTION WAS OVER FOR THE TIME BEING, AND THE EXHAUSTED GUNNERS RESTED . . . ALL EXCEPT CORPORAL ELLIS IN CHARGE OF NUMBER FOUR GUN. HE SEEMED ANXIOUS TO LEAVE . . .



LET'S MOVE SARGE! THERE MIGHT BE MORE JERRIES AROUND!

SERGEANT KELLY GAVE THE WORD AND THEY MOVED OFF ONCE MORE. THAT NIGHT, THEY CAMPED IN A PROTECTIVE HOLLOW, WHILE KELLY SIZED THINGS UP



WE'VE THIRTY MEN, THREE GOOD TRUCKS, FAIR AMMUNITION, LITTLE FOOD AND EVEN LESS WATER . . . BUT WE'LL GET THROUGH

LISTENING TO KELLY'S CRISP DECISIVE TONES ONLY MADE HEFTY HOPWOOD ALL THE MORE CONSCIOUS OF HIS OWN SHORTCOMINGS

WE'LL KEEP CLOSE TO THE COAST THEN MAYBE WE'LL STRIKE SOLLUM AND FIND A SHIP.

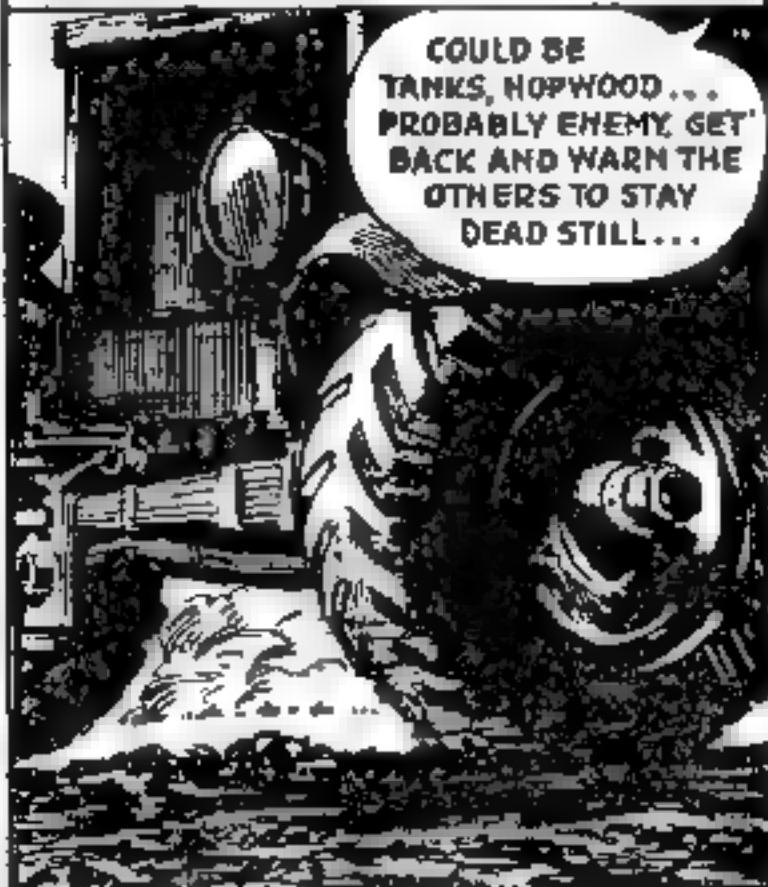
WISH I COULD LEAD PEOPLE THE WAY THE SARGE DOES. SEEMS TO COME NATURAL WITH SOME BLOKES . . .

BEFORE LIGHT THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY AGAIN. HEFTY SHARED THE CAB OF THE LEADING TRUCK, WITH KELLY DRIVING. BY NOON THE BRASSY SUN BEAT DOWN ONCE MORE.



SUDDENLY KELLY BROUGHT HIS TRUCK TO A GRINDING HALT. HIS EYES, SCANNING THE HOSTILE WASTES, HAD CAUGHT THE TELL-TALE DUST OF MOVING VEHICLES.

COULD BE TANKS, HOPWOOD . . . PROBABLY ENEMY. GET BACK AND WARN THE OTHERS TO STAY DEAD STILL . . .



HEFTY RAN TO THE TRUCK BEHIND, WHERE GUNNER STACKER POKED OUT A WORRIED FACE . . .

SARGE SAYS DON'T MOVE, OR THE JERRIES WILL SPOT OUR DUST TRAILS.

OKAY, BUT SUPPOSE THEY SEE US?

NOT STOPPING TO REPLY, HEFTY MOVED TO THE THIRD TRUCK AND REPEATED THE WARNING. BUT CORPORAL ELLIS SEEMED NOT TO HEAR. HIS EYES WERE SHIFTY WITH FEAR. . .

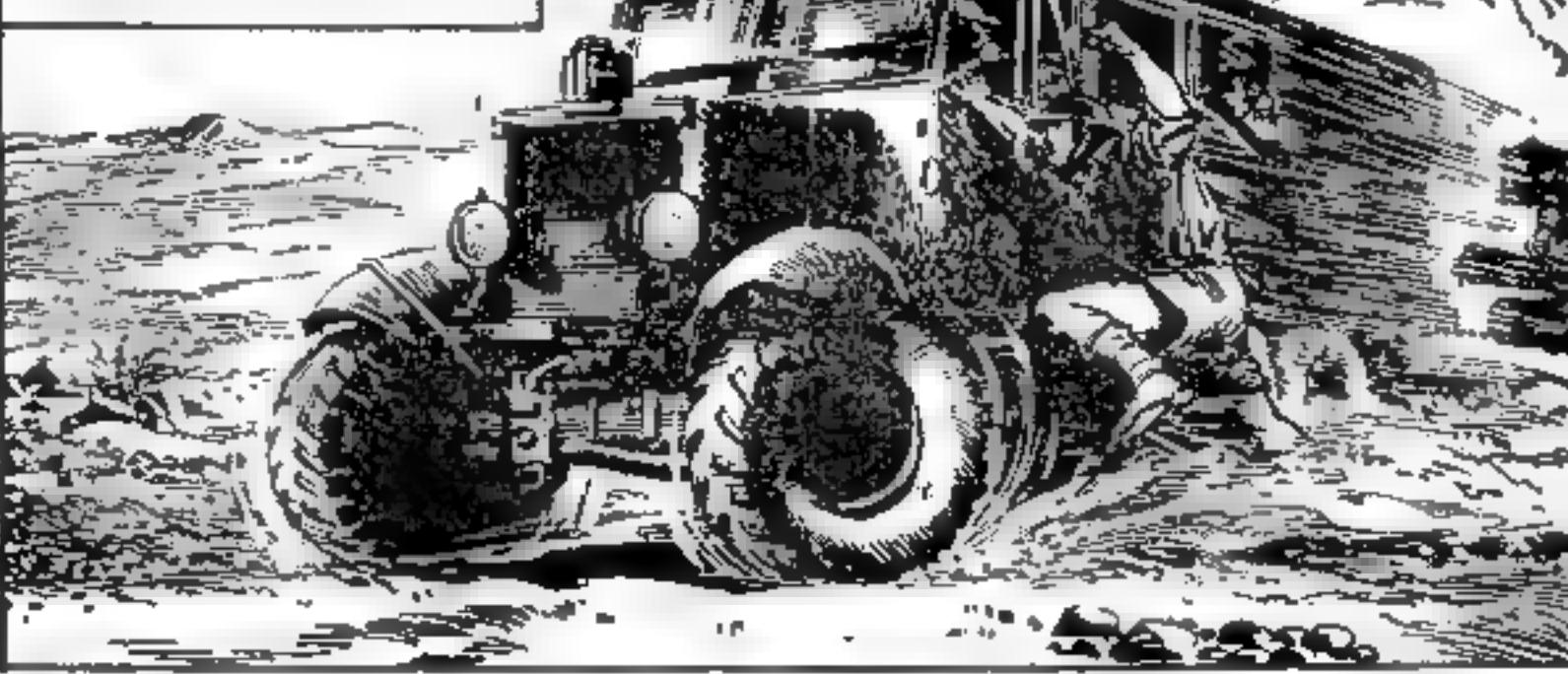
DO YOU HEAR ELLIS?

ED?

STUNG INTO SUDDEN PANIC, ELLIS RAMMED HOME THE GEAR LEVER AND SWUNG THE TRUCK TO THE RIGHT WITH A FURIOUS SHOUT, HEFTY TOOK A FLYING LEAP TO STOP HIM.

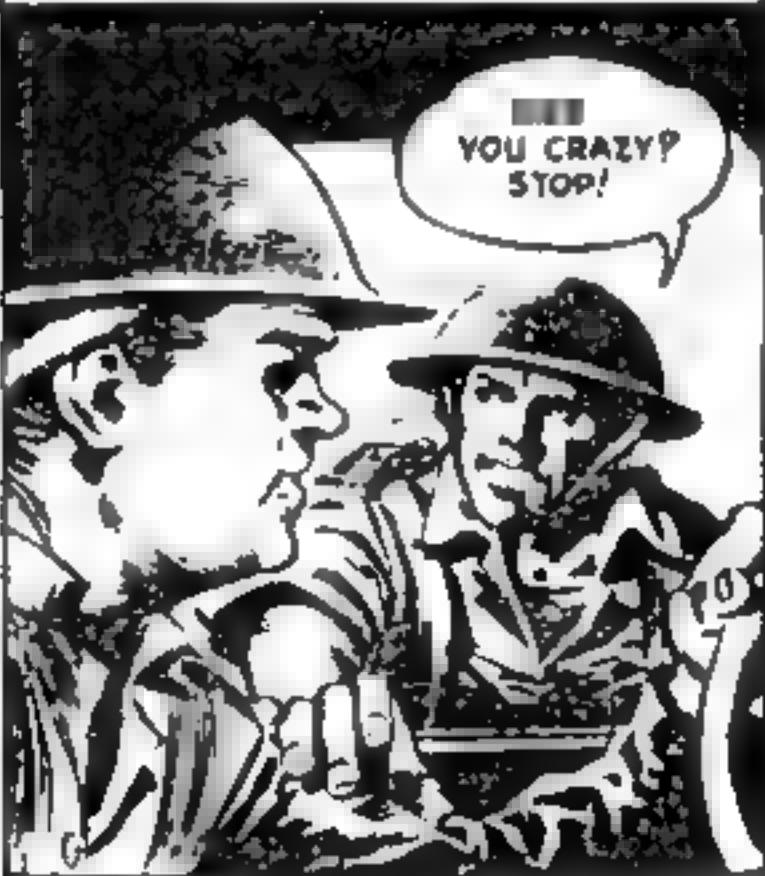
STAY STILL, YOU FOOL!

WHAT THE HECK'S GOING ON?



## Road from Tobruk

DOGGEDLY, HEFTY HELD ON. ONCE HE HAD FAILED TO STOP A SHIP IN TOBRUK HARBOUR, AND NOW HE WAS FAILING TO STOP ELLIS



GOADED INTO ACTION, HEFTY MADE A GRAB AT THE WHITE-FACED CORPORAL . . . ONLY TO RECEIVE A STUNNING BLOW.



HEFTY FELL ON ROCKY GROUND. HE PULLED HIMSELF WEAKLY TO HIS KNEES, THEN SUDDENLY HEARD THE OMINOUS WHISTLE OF AIRCRAFT AND THE HAMMERING CHATTER OF MACHINE-GUNS.



HEFTY CRAWLED TO THE RIDGE AND LOOKED DOWN . . . TO GASP IN COLD HORROR . . .

THE TRUCK! THAT JERRY PLANE GOT IT!

ELLIS AND HIS HAPLESS TEAM HAD PAID A SHARP PRICE FOR DISOBEDIENCE. THEIR DUST TRAIL HAD BROUGHT UPON THEM THE FATE FROM WHICH THEY HAD FLED.

NOT A MAN MOVED FROM THE FURIOUSLY BURNING TRUCK. THEN, WITH SHOCK SUDDENNESS, THE AMMUNITION EXPLODED!

GOOD GRIEF!

SICK WITH DESPAIR, HEFTY HOPWOOD RETRACED HIS STEPS TO THE HIGHER GROUND. HE HEARD THE TRUCKS REVVING, AND THE VERY SOUND FILLED HIM WITH FRESH DREAD . . .

THEY'RE MOVING!  
KELLY'S MOVING!



HEFTY FORCED HIMSELF INTO A HOBBLING RUN AND, WITH ONLY SECONDS TO SPARE, SCRAMBLED IN BESIDE THE GRIM-FACED KELLY AS THE TRUCK GATHERED SPEED.

IN QUICK, HOPWOOD!  
JERRY'S SEEN US!



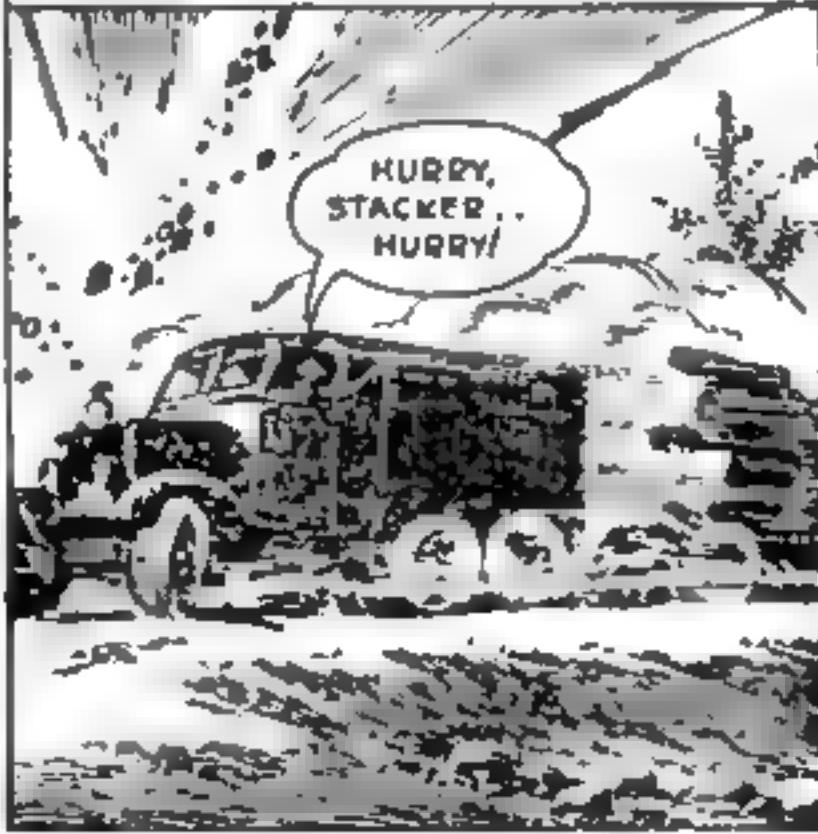
PITCHED ABOUT IN THE LURCHING CAB, HEFTY EXPLAINED THE FATE OF ELLIS' CREW IN THE DISTANCE, THE ENEMY FOLLOWED, POISED AS IF MAKING UP THEIR MINDS TO GIVE CHASE

THEY'RE TANKS ALL RIGHT! WILL THEY CATCH US?



KELLY HAD BARELY SPOKEN WHEN EXPLODING SHELLS KICKED UP GOUTS OF SAND IN THEIR PATH. ACCELERATING QUICKLY THE SERGEANT YELLED AT THE TRUCK BEHIND

HURRY, STACKER... HURRY!



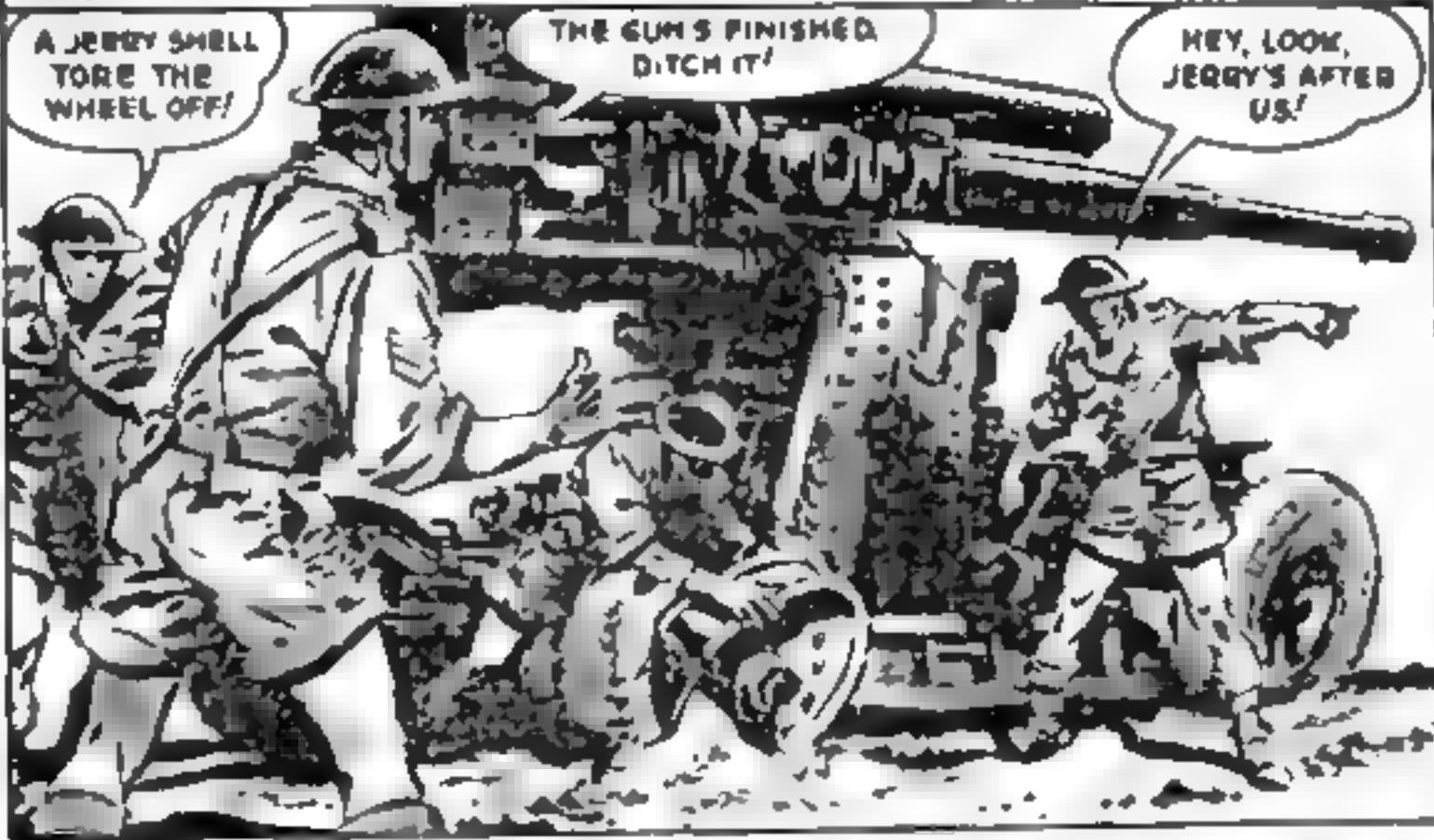
SECONDS LATER, AN EXPLOSION BEHIND MADE HEFTY AND KELLY TURN IN THEIR SEATS . . .

WHAT'S WRONG?

STOP, SARGE! STACKER'S IN TROUBLE!



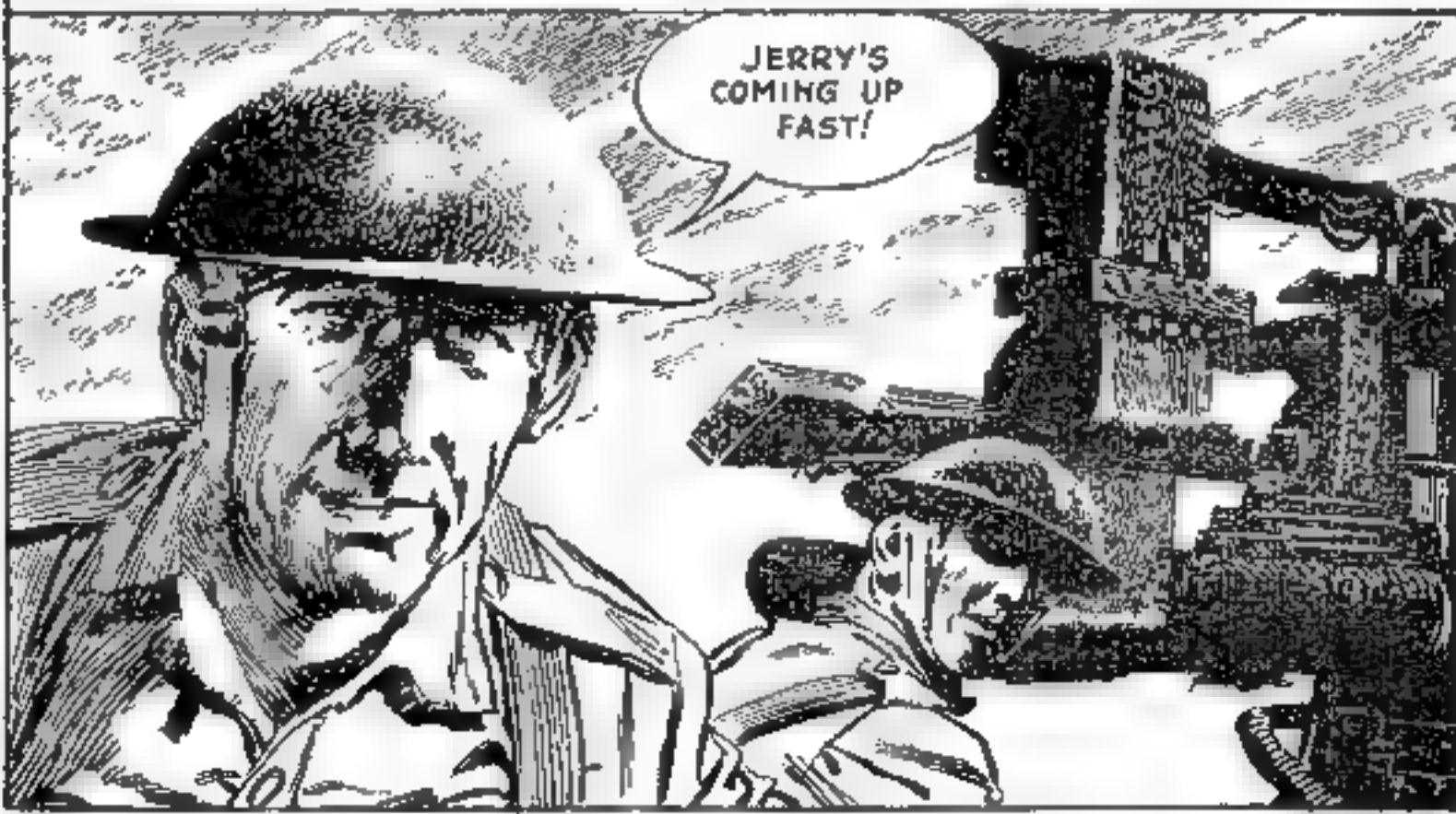
KELLY STAMPED ON THE BRAKES. THEY LEAPT OUT AND RACED BACK TO THE SECOND TRUCK



ENCOURAGED BY THE SIGHT OF A CRIPPLED PREY,  
THE GERMAN TANKS MOVED IN FOR THE KILL . . .

FORWARD!

FOR THE GUNNERS, IT WAS A MAD SCRAMBLING RACE TO WRENCH THE TOW-BAR FREE. THEN GUNNER STACKER GAVE A YELL . . .



AT LAST IT WAS DONE. THE USELESS GUN FELL FREE. BUT NOW THEY COULD PLAINLY HEAR THE GRIND OF THE ENEMY TANK TRACKS. AT KELLY'S HOARSE SHOUT, THE GUNNERS RACED ACROSS THE SAND



HEFTY HEARD THE POUNDING BOOTS AROUND HIM. THEN HE TRIPPED HEADLONG OVER THE BODY OF SERGEANT KELLY, KILLED BY A SHELL SPLINTER.



THERE WAS NO TIME FOR HEROICS. THE SPRINTING GUNNERS HURLED THEMSELVES INTO THEIR TRUCK . . . AND LEFT THE WHEEL TO HEFTY HOPWOOD . . .



HEFTY DROVE AS IF DEATH ITSELF CHASED BEHIND HIM . . .

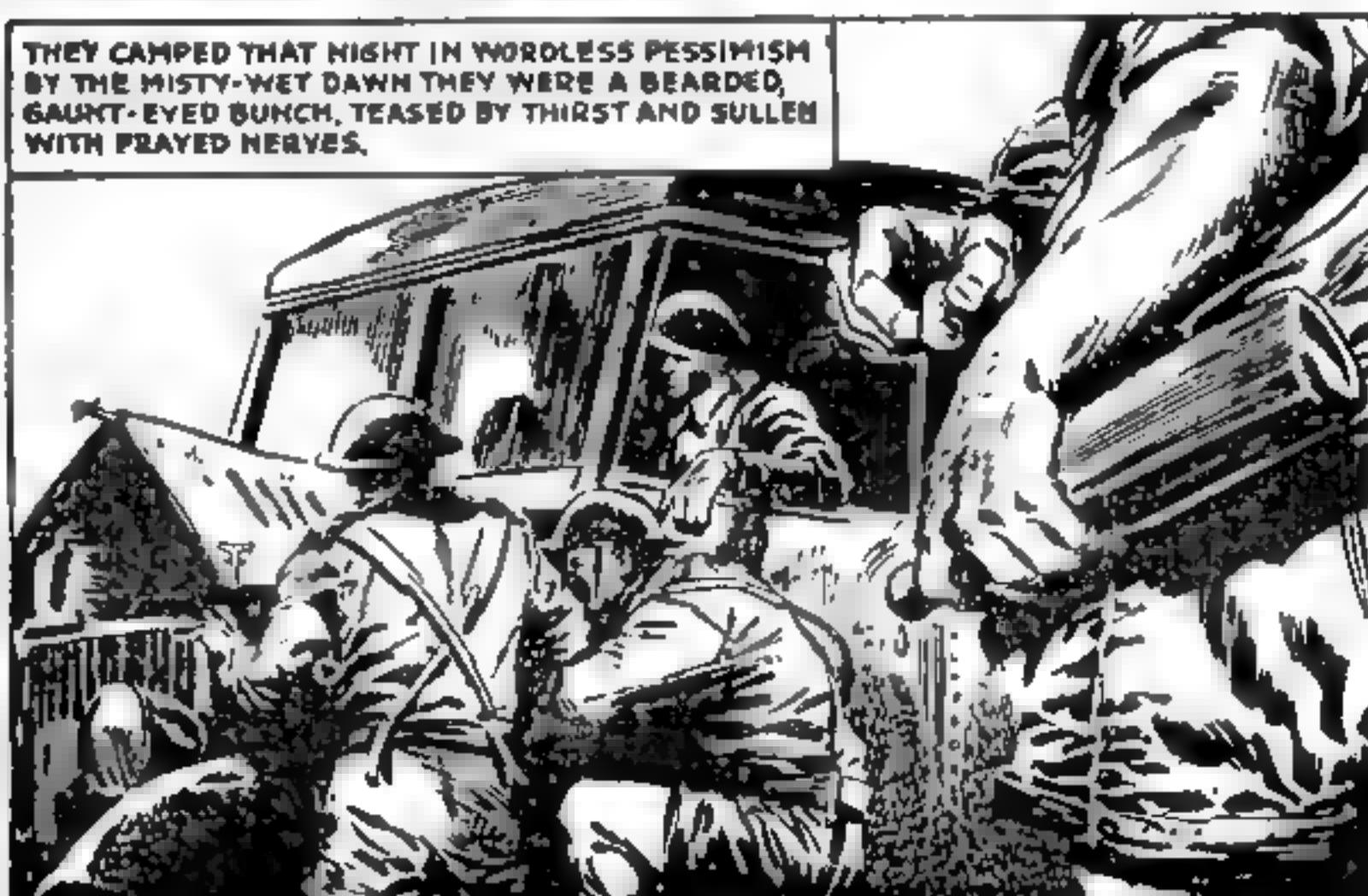


IN TIME, THE CAREERING MILES PUT THEM BEYOND PURSUIT . . . BUT NEVER BEYOND THE BLACK REALISATION THAT THEY WERE LEADERLESS. THE FEARLESS KELLY WAS GONE.



SUDDENLY, THE VAST SUN BAKED DESERT LOOKED BLEAK, OMINOUS . . .

THEY CAMPED THAT NIGHT IN WORDLESS PESSIMISM BY THE MISTY-WET DAWN THEY WERE A BEARDED, GAUNT-EYED BUNCH, TEASED BY THIRST AND SULLEN WITH PRAYED NERVES.



BUT THERE WAS ONE DECISION WHICH GAVE THEM NO STRAIN . . .

THE GUN  
MUST GO.

IT'S ONLY  
A LUMBER!

WHAT?

HEFTY HOPWOOD WAS AGHAST. ALL HIS NATURAL SHYNESS BURST INTO SPUTTERING INDIGNATION

L...LEAVE THE GUN?  
LEAVE LUCY? YOU'RE  
CRAZY! WITHOUT HER WE'D  
BE COMPLETELY DEFENCELESS!

FACING THE SCOWLING GUNNERS, HEFTY WAS SURPRISED AT HIS OWN BOLDNESS. IT WAS NOT LIKE HIM TO ARGUE.

LUCY'S OUR ONLY PROTECTION. WE'VE GOT TO KEEP HER

HEFTY DID NOT KNOW IT BUT OUT OF HIS PROTECTIVE DEVOTION TO THE GUN WAS EMERGING THE VERY QUALITY HE PRIZED SO HIGHLY . . . SELF-ASSERTION . . .

TO THE LITTLE GUNNER'S ASTONISHMENT, THE MEN GAVE IN. THEY SHRUGGED THEIR SHOULDERS AND PREPARED TO LEAVE. HEFTY STARED UNBELIEVINGLY . . .

STONE THE CROWS . . . THEY'RE DOING AS I SAID !

## Road from Tobruk

STILL MARYELLING AT HIS OWN BOLDNESS, HEFTY TOOK THE WHEEL. BEHIND HIM RUMBLED THE GUN WHICH SEEMED TO EXERT SUCH A COMPELLING INFLUENCE ON HIM . . .

THEY LEFT ME TO DRIVE, THAT MEANS THE DECISIONS ARE UP TO ME!



THEIR DIRECTION LAY VAGUELY EASTWARD. SOMEWHERE OVER THAT BURNING MOUND OF SAND LAY THE PORT OF SOLLUM . . . AND MAYBE A SHIP. BUT ILL-LUCK STILL DOGGED THEM . . . THE SECOND TRUCK SPLUTTERED AND STOPPED . . .

IT'S SEDIMENT IN THE PETROL FEED.

WE'RE GETTING NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE TANK, TOO.

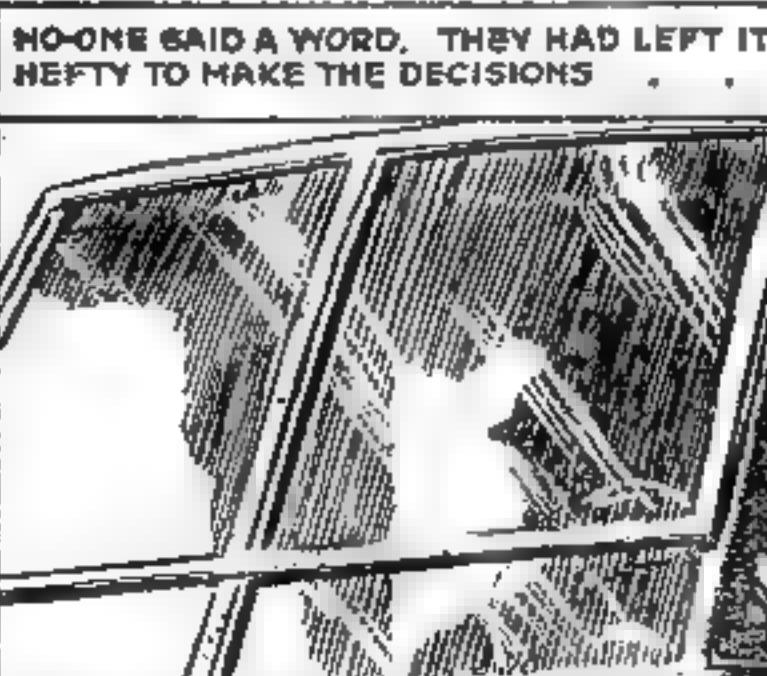
WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT TO SOLLUM.



FOR TWO HOURS THE GUNNERS TOILED UNDER THE BLAZING SUN TO CLEAR THE PETROL FEED. WHEN THE JOB WAS DONE THEY SLUMPED EXHAUSTED TO THE GROUND. IT WAS HEFTY WHO GOT THEM MOVING AGAIN ...



WE'D STAND A BETTER CHANCE CUTTING NORTH ... MAYBE WE'LL STRIKE SOME OTHER PORT SOONER.



NO-ONE SAID A WORD. THEY HAD LEFT IT TO HEFTY TO MAKE THE DECISIONS . . .



COR . . . WHAT A TURN-UP!  
THEY'RE TREATING ME AS IF I'M THE BOSS!



# Chapter 3. Shock Tactics

THAT NIGHT, THEY SLEPT BY THEIR TRUCKS IN A DEEP-5 DEG WADI. IN THE MORNING, THEY WOKE TO SIT UP AND STARE IN HORROR AND DISMAY.



THERE, AT THE LIP OF THE WADI, STOOD A GERMAN SCOUT CAR. THE ENEMY CREW STARED DOWN AT THEM, MOTIONLESS AND SILENT.

HOW LONG HAVE THEY  
BEEN THERE?

WHY  
DON'T THEY  
SHOOT?



AS THOUGH FEARFUL OF BREAKING THE WORDLESS SPELL, THE GUNNERS ROSE SLOWLY TO THEIR FEET. ONLY HEFTY HOPWOOD WAS RACKING HIS WITS . . .



WITH A COOLNESS THAT SURPRISED HIMSELF, HEFTY TOOK IN THE WHOLE SITUATION . . . PARTICULARLY THE POSITION OF THE ENEMY SCOUT CAR IN RELATION TO THE GUN.

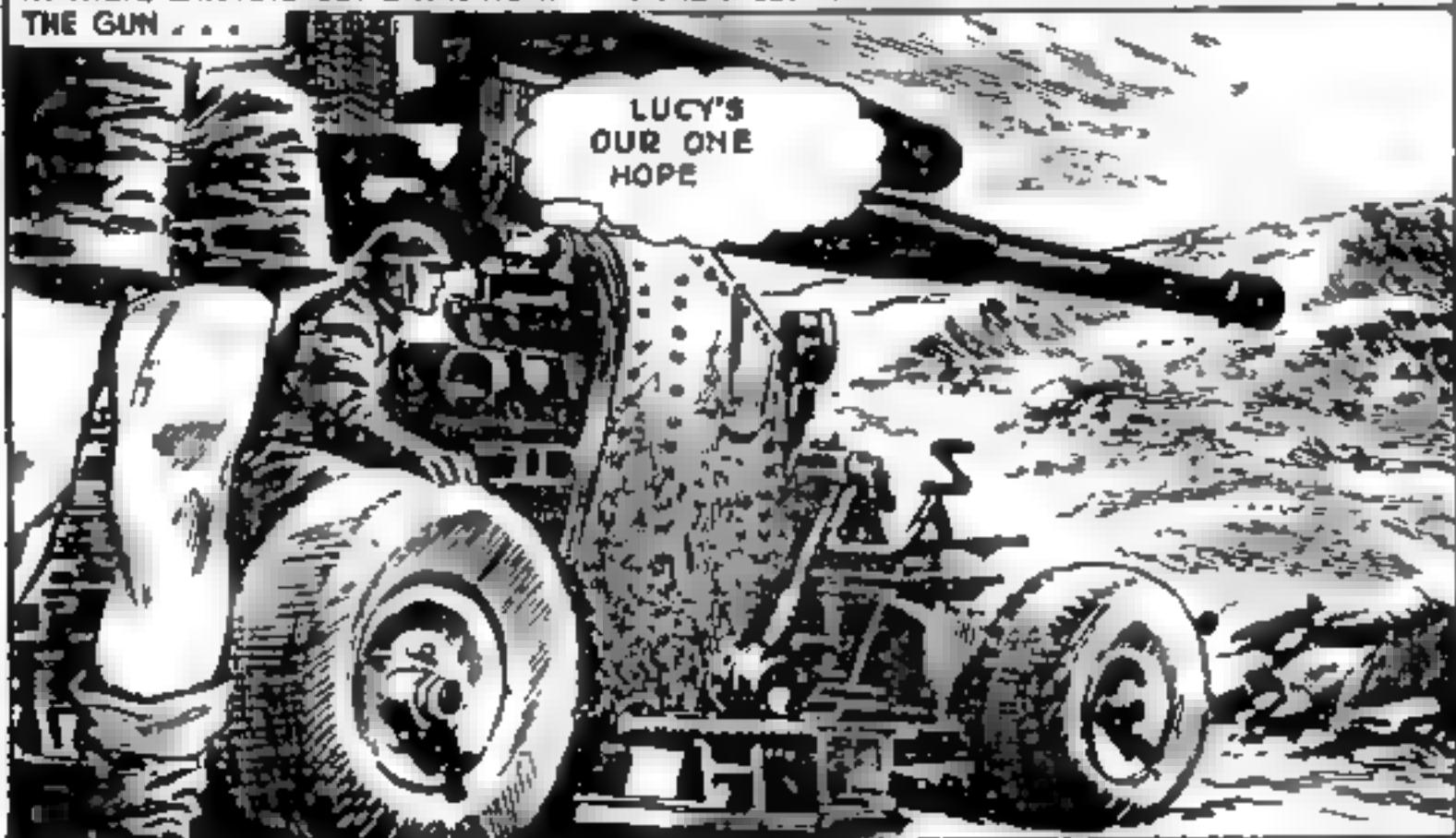


# Road from TOBRUK

AS THE LONG, STRAINED MINUTES WORE ON, THE GROWING LIGHT REVEALED THE THREE NAZI SOLDIERS WATCHING THE BRITISH, NO DOUBT BALDING THEIR CHANCES OF CAPTURING THE GUNNERS BEFORE THE GUN COULD BE BROUGHT INTO ACTION.



IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THE GUNNERS THAT AT ANY TIME THE GERMANS MIGHT CLIMB BACK IN THEIR CAR AND COME RACING IN FOR THE KILL. THEM HEFTY SLOWLY CLIMBED ON TO THE GUN . . .



PICKING UP AN OILY RAG, HEFTY MADE A PLAY OF GUM-CLEANING, BUT ALL THE WHILE HIS EYE WAS TAKING IN ANGLES . . .



DEPRESSION'S OKAY . . . IF ONLY WE COULD SWING LUCY ROUND A FEW FEET . . .

SEEING GUNNER STACKER FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, HEFTY SPOKE UNDER HIS BREATH . . .



START UP THE TRUCK . . . IT'LL SWING LUCY ROUND. I'LL DO THE REST.

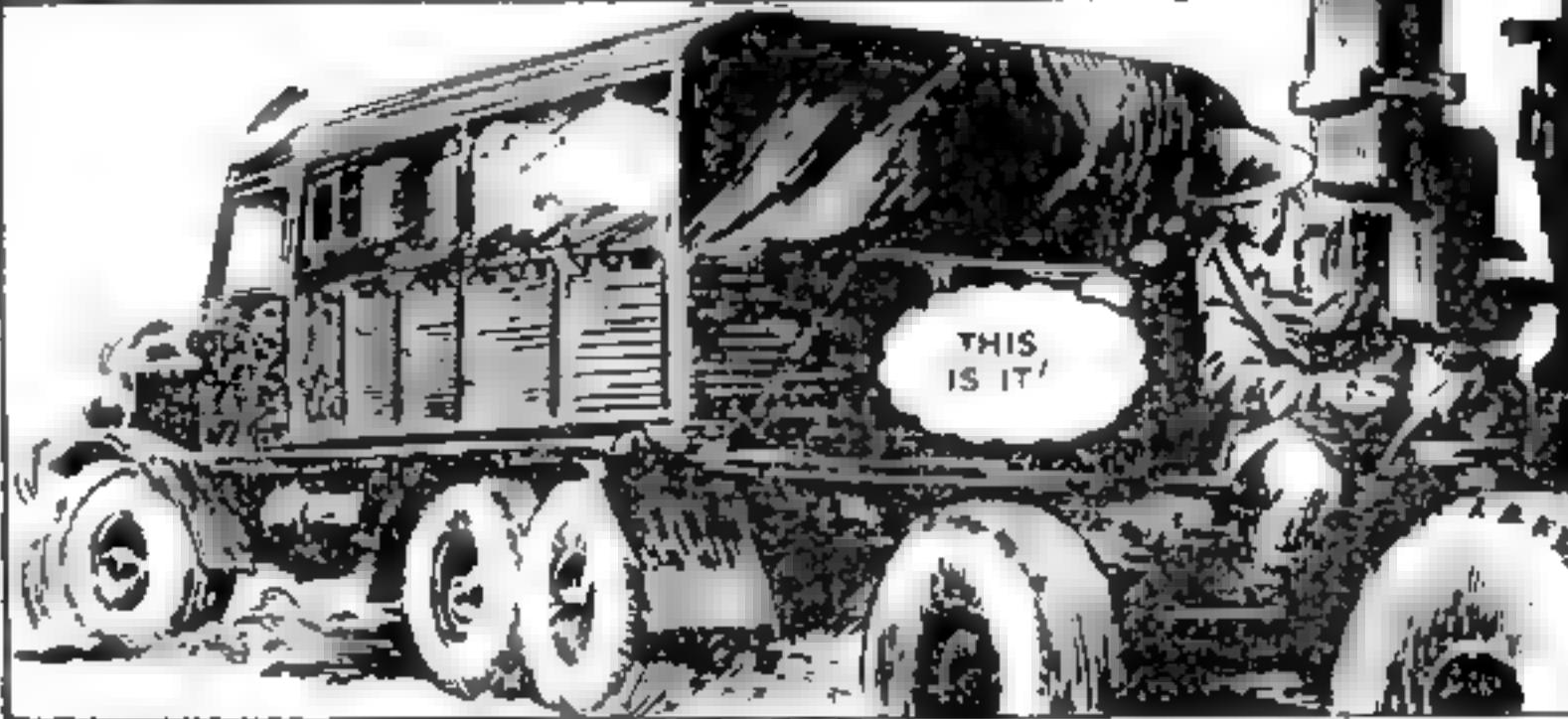


OKAY, IT'S A CHANCE . . .

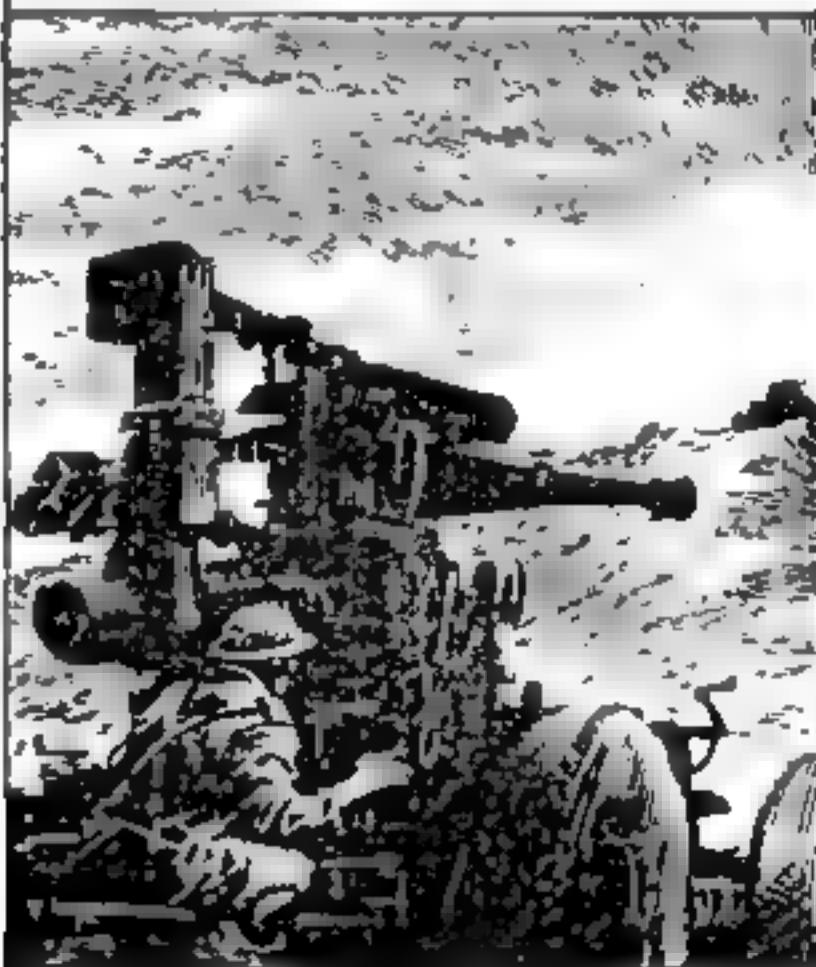
STACKER ACTED HIS PART WELL. TIREDLY, AS IF BORED WITH WAITING HE MOUNTED THE CAB. BUT THE NAZIS, TAKING NO CHANCES, GOT INTO THE SCOUT CAR . . .



GUNNER STACKER PULLED THE STARTER. THE ENGINE ROARED TO LIFE FIRST TIME. HE SLAMMED IN THE BOTTOM GEAR AND THE GREAT TRUCK CREEPT FORWARD



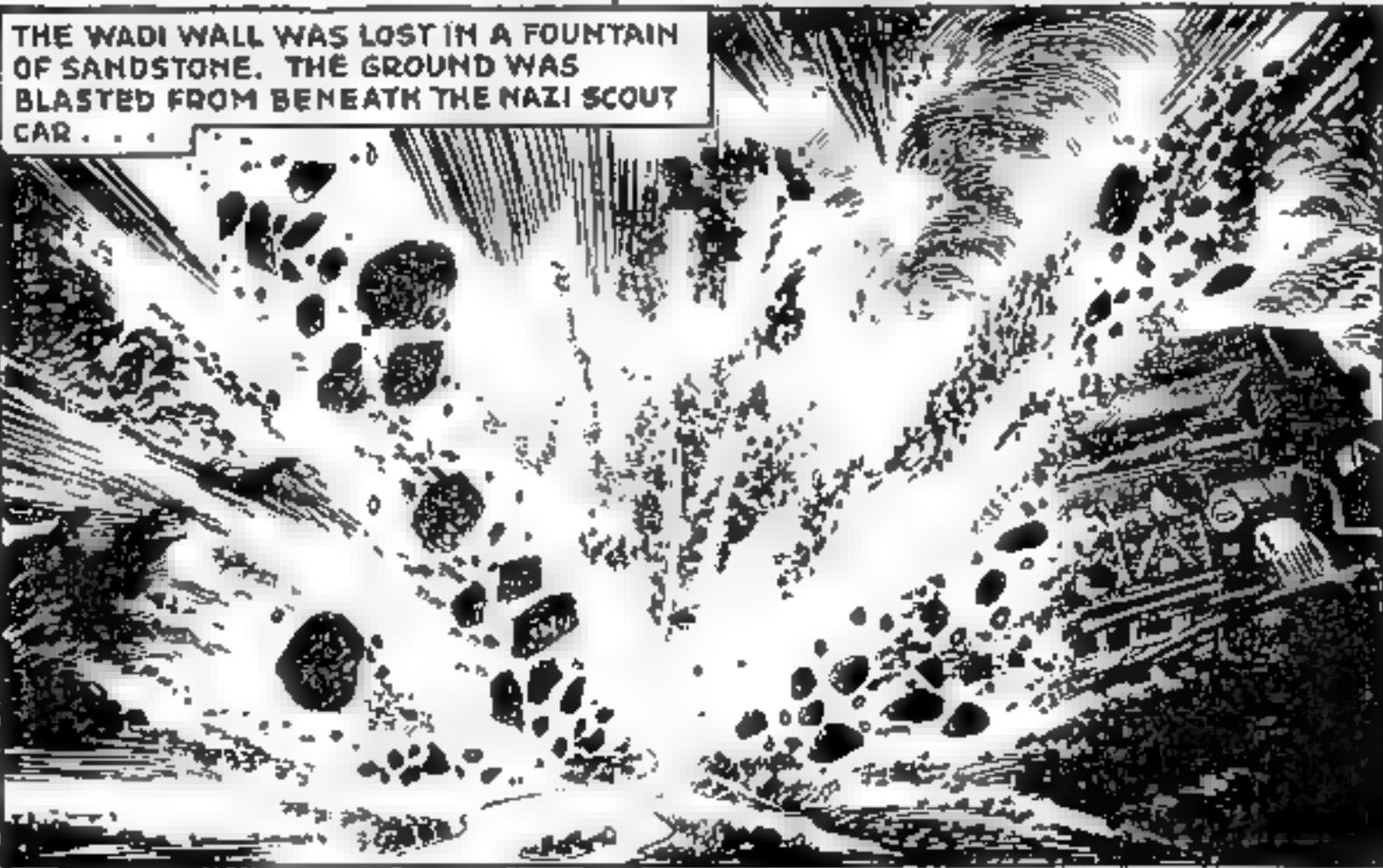
AS THE TRUCK MOVED SO THE LONG PROBING MUZZLE OF THE GUN CAME CREEPING ROUND, INCH AFTER INCH, UNTIL



THE NEXT SECOND, HEFTY BANGED AT THE FIRING LEVER. THE GUN ROARED AND ROCKED. THE BARREL SMACKED BACK ON ITS BUFFER AND THE STENCH OF CORDITE SMOTE HIS NOSTRILS . . .



THE WADI WALL WAS LOST IN A FOUNTAIN OF SANDSTONE. THE GROUND WAS BLASTED FROM BENEATH THE NAZI SCOUT CAR . . .



WITH HOWLS OF RELIEF, THE GUNNERS FLUNG THEMSELVES ON THE WRECKED VEHICLE. THEY FOUND FOOD AND LIFE-GIVING WATER,

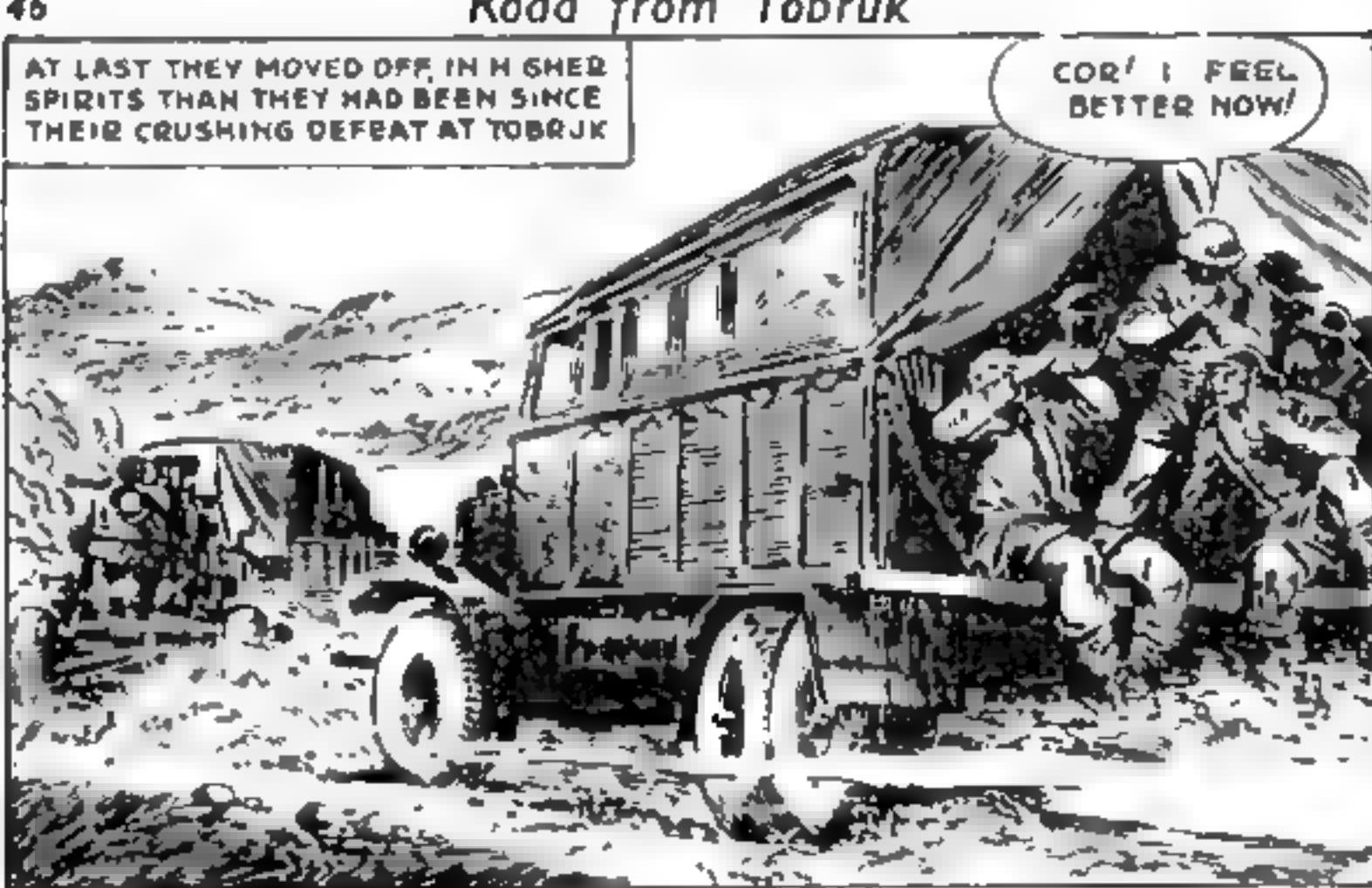
WHAT A TURN-UP!



## 'Road from Tobruk

AT LAST THEY MOVED OFF, IN HIGHER SPIRITS THAN THEY HAD BEEN SINCE THEIR CRUSHING DEFEAT AT TOBRUK

COR! I FEEL BETTER NOW!



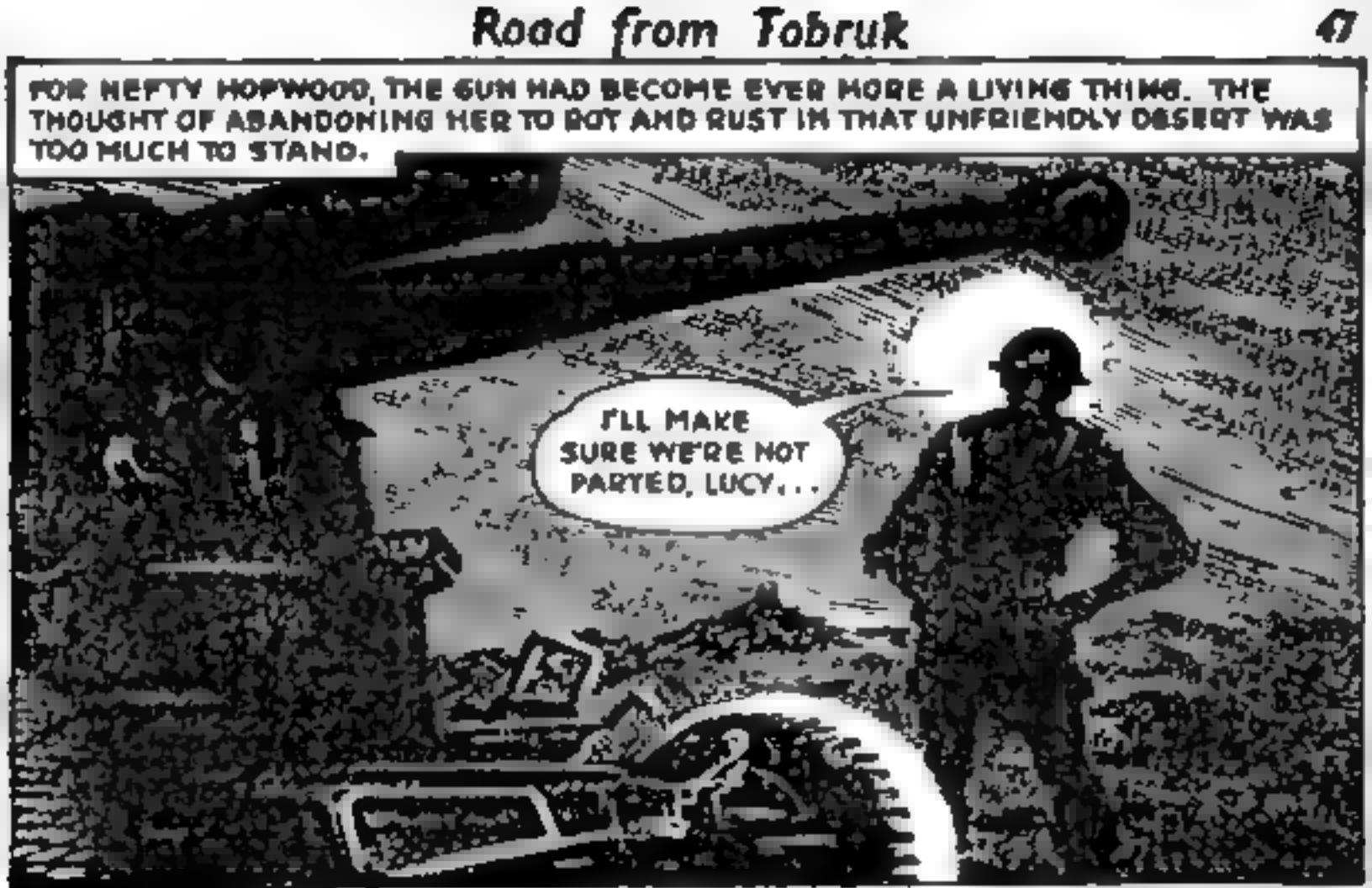
WHEN THEY FINALLY HALTED THAT NIGHT, THEY BEGAN LOOKING AT MEFTY HOPWOOD IN A NEW WAY. THEY STILL DID NOT UNDERSTAND HIM. WHERE WAS THE QUIET, MOUSY TYPE THEY USED TO KNOW . . . ?

HE STILL DOESN'T TALK MUCH.

NO, BUT HE'S CHANGED.

HE LOOKS AS IF HE'S ON HOLIDAY . . . NOT BEING CHASED ACROSS HUNDREDS OF MILES OF SAND BY A PACK OF HUNS!

FOR HEFTY HOPWOOD, THE GUN HAD BECOME EVER MORE A LIVING THING. THE THOUGHT OF ABANDONING HER TO ROT AND RUST IN THAT UNFRIENDLY DESERT WAS TOO MUCH TO STAND.



I'LL MAKE  
SURE WE'RE NOT  
PARTED, LUCY...

YET ANOTHER DAY DAWNED WITH A ROSE-TINTED SUN WHICH CLIMBED MERCILESSLY TO A ZENITH OF OVEN-HEAT. ONCE A FLIGHT OF GERMAN FIGHTER PLANES ROARED EASTWARD, AND BY THAT THE FUGITIVES GUESSED THE WORST



ROMMEL'S  
CHASING OUR  
MOB ALL THE WAY  
TO MERSA!

## Road from Tobruk

STILL AT THE WHEEL OF THE TRUCK, HEFTY HOPWOOD DROVE DOGGEDLY NORTH. LATER, HE SPOTTED A SWIRLING DARK CLOUD AHEAD. HE REACHED FOR HIS GOGGLES AND CALLED A WARNING

SANDSTORM! COVER YOUR HEADS!



IN REPLY, HEFTY HEARD SHOUTS OF ALARM. HE STOPPED AND JUMPED DOWN FROM THE CAB . . . TO STAND TRANSFIXED WITH COLD HORROR LIKE THE REST OF THEM . . .

STONE THE CROWS!

LOOK!



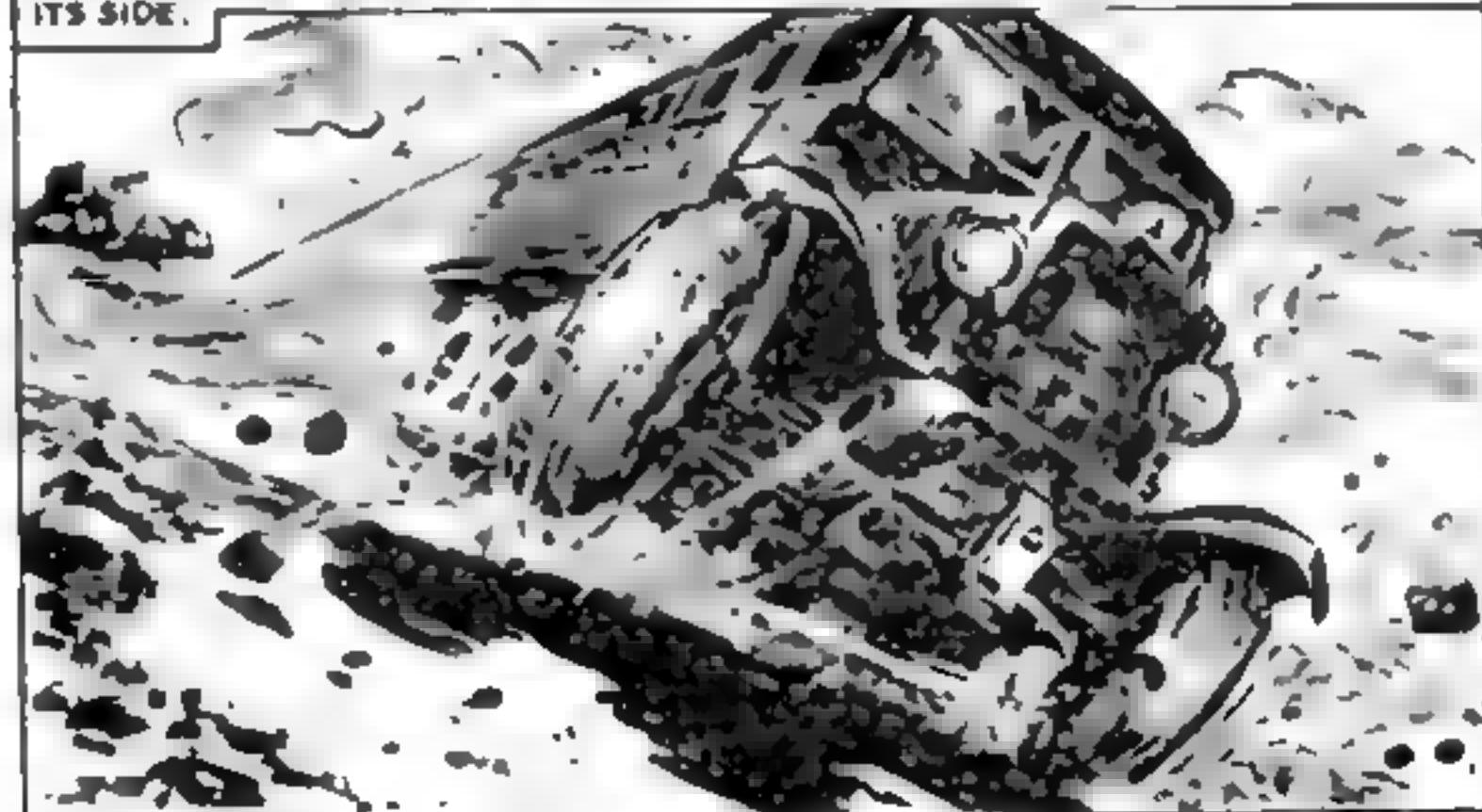
# Road from Tobruk

49

AS IF IN A BAD DREAM, THEY SAW THE SECOND TRUCK, LABOURING FAR BEHIND WITH PERSISTENT SPEED TROUBLE, BEING MOWDED DOWN BY THREE ENEMY ARMOURED CARS



THEY SAW THE HARRIER TRUCK LURCH AND SKID IN THE DUSTY & FRANTIC EFFORTS TO EVADE THE PURSUIT. AT LAST IT SLEWED DOWN AN INCLINE AND CRASHED ON ITS SIDE.



## Road from Tobruk

THE PURSUERS CLOSED IN, AND EVEN AS HEFTY AND THE OTHERS STARED WITH APPALLED AND UNBELIEVING EYES, THE ENEMY GUNS EMPTIED THEMSELVES AT THEIR FALLEN PREY.



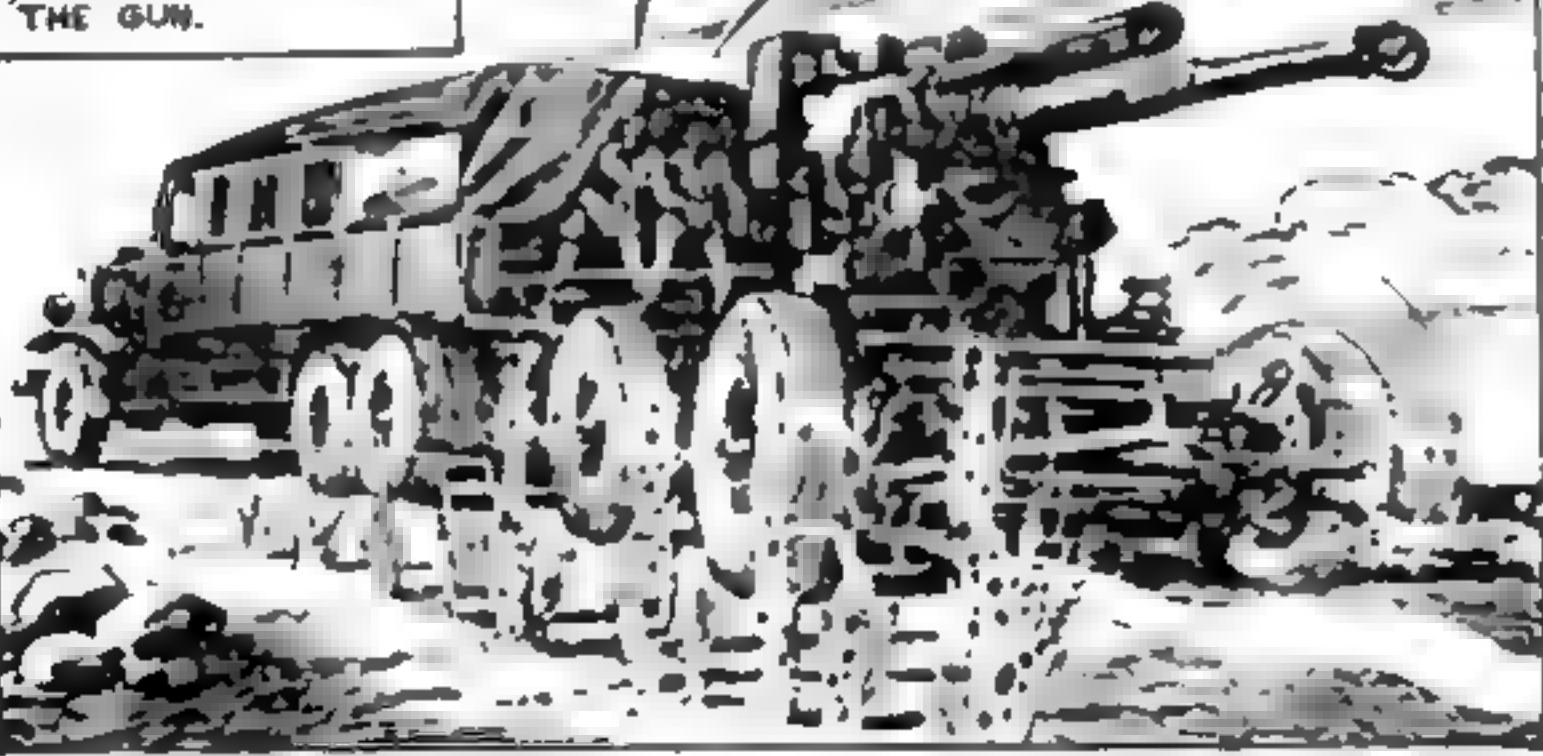
IN ONE LEAP, HEFTY WAS BACK AT THE WHEEL, CRASHING THE GEAR-LEVER INTO PLACE. FEAR-STRICKEN YELLS CAME FROM BEHIND . . . .

THEY'RE COMING AFTER US!

FASTER! . . . FASTER!

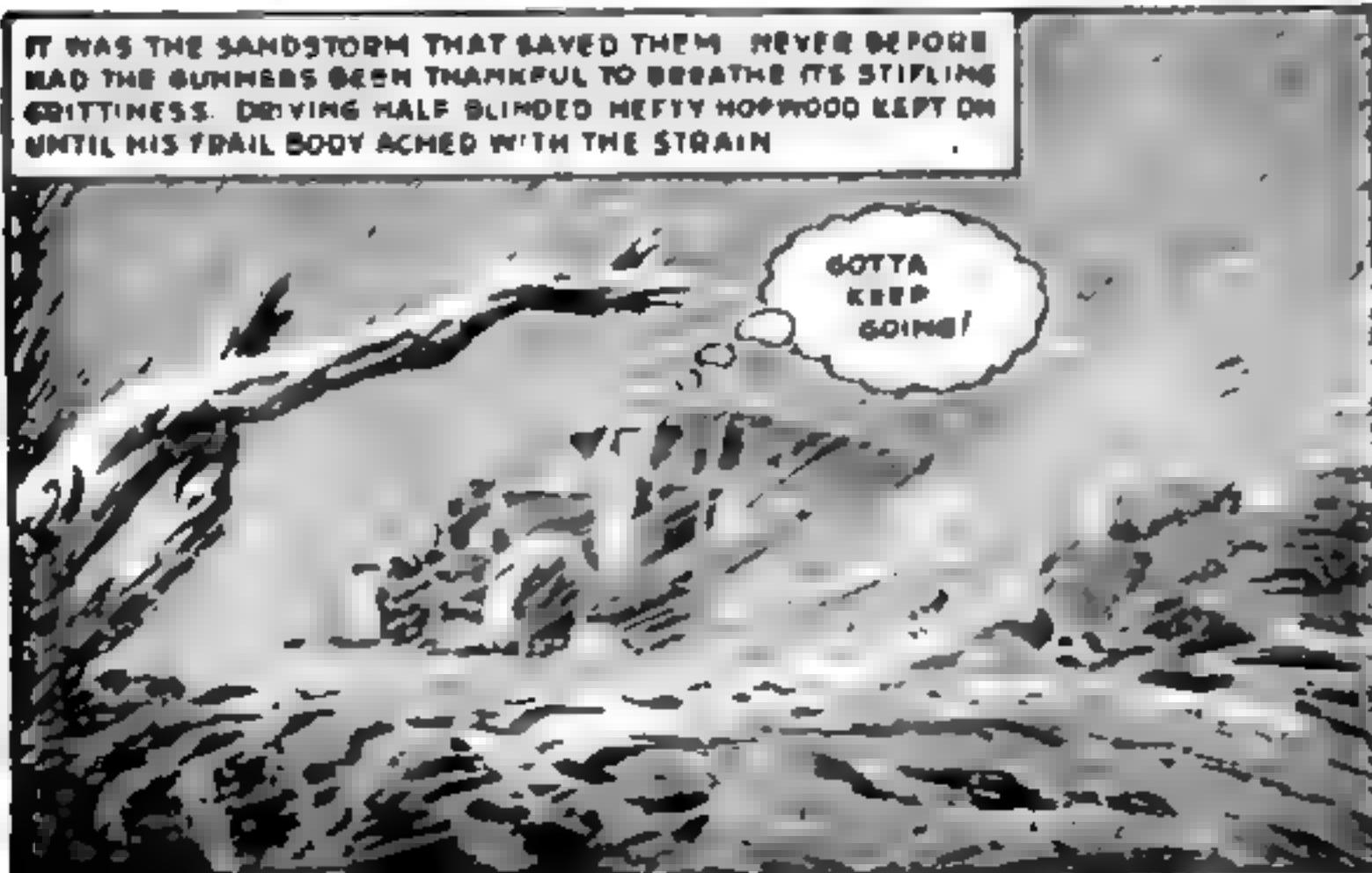


WITH SPINE-CHILLING CERTAINTY, THE FAST ENEMY CAR'S CLOSED THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM. ALREADY, BULLETS WHINED PAST THE GUN.



IT WAS THE SANDSTORM THAT SAVED THEM. NEVER BEFORE HAD THE GUNNERS BEEN THANKFUL TO BREATHE ITS STIFLING GRITTESS. DRIVING HALF BLINDED HEFTY HOPWOOD KEPT ON UNTIL HIS FRAIL BODY ACHED WITH THE STRAIN.

GOTTA  
KEEP  
GOIN'!



Land from Tahrir



IT'S JUST  
A BARBED  
NUISANCE,  
ANYWAY

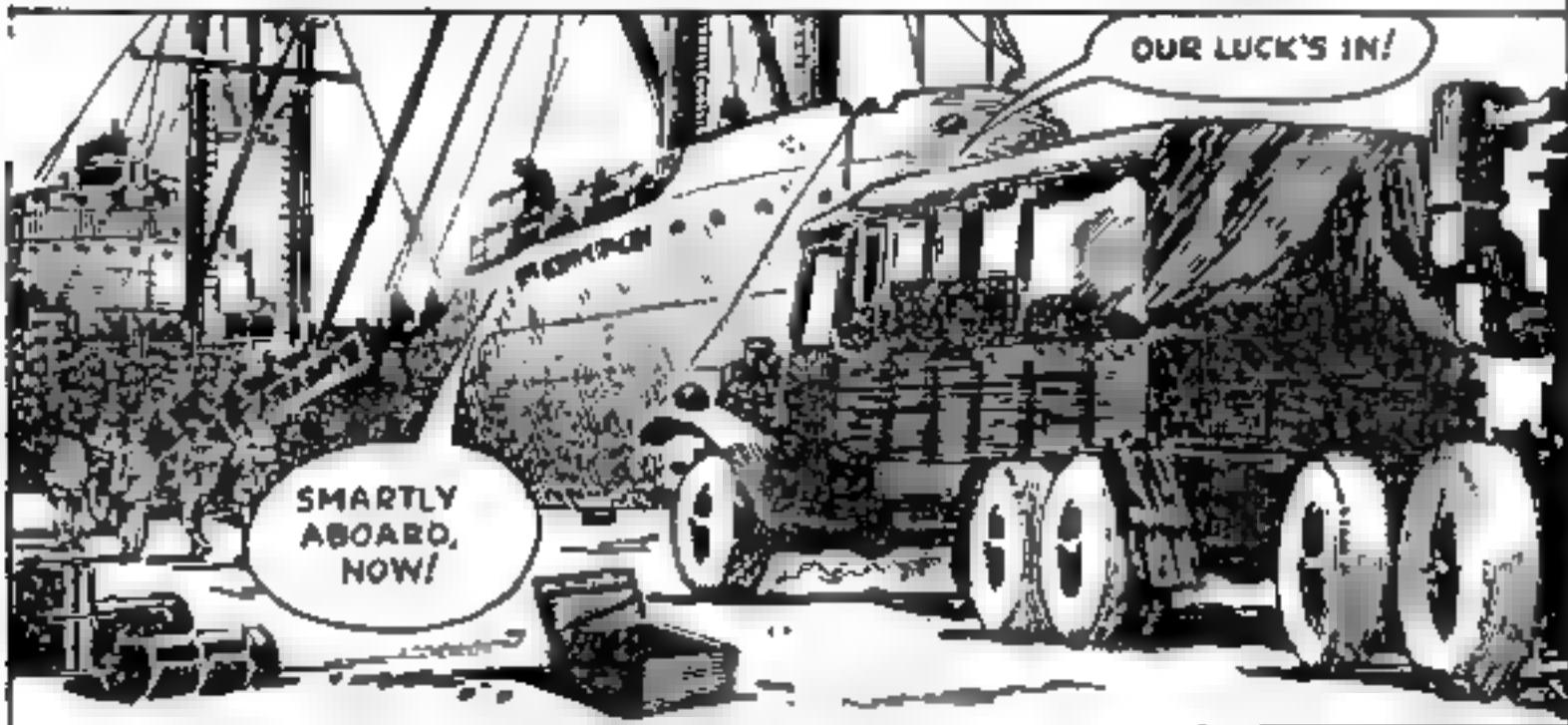


MASK OF YELLOW  
DUST, WAS FIERCE  
BE SPURRED



# Chapter 4. Strange Destiny

SO, FOR THE SECOND TIME AT HEFTY HOPWOOD'S INSISTENCE, THE GUN LUCY WAS REPRIVED. AT LONG LAST THEY REACHED A SMALL HARBOUR, WHERE A BRITISH BOOM DEFENCE VESSEL WAS TAKING ABOARD BATTLE-WEARY SOLDIERS . . .



FIVE MINUTES LATER, HEFTY HOPWOOD STOOD ON THE QUAY ARGUING WITH THE CAPTAIN. BUT LIEUTENANT CHANNING SHOOK HIS HEAD . . .

WHAT? YOU'D CHUCK AWAY AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN... WITH ALL THOSE ENEMY BOMBERS WE'RE GOING TO MEET!

SORRY, SOLDIER, BUT I'M NOT HAVING THAT GUN ABOARD.



EYING THAT SLENDER FIGURE DOWN ON THE QUAY, LIEUTENANT CHANNING FELT A SUDDEN SURGE OF WARMTH AND RESPECT. FINALLY HE GAVE IN . . .

ALL RIGHT, WE'LL HOIST YOUR POP-GUN ABOARD. WE'LL MOUNT IT ON THE AFTER-DECK.



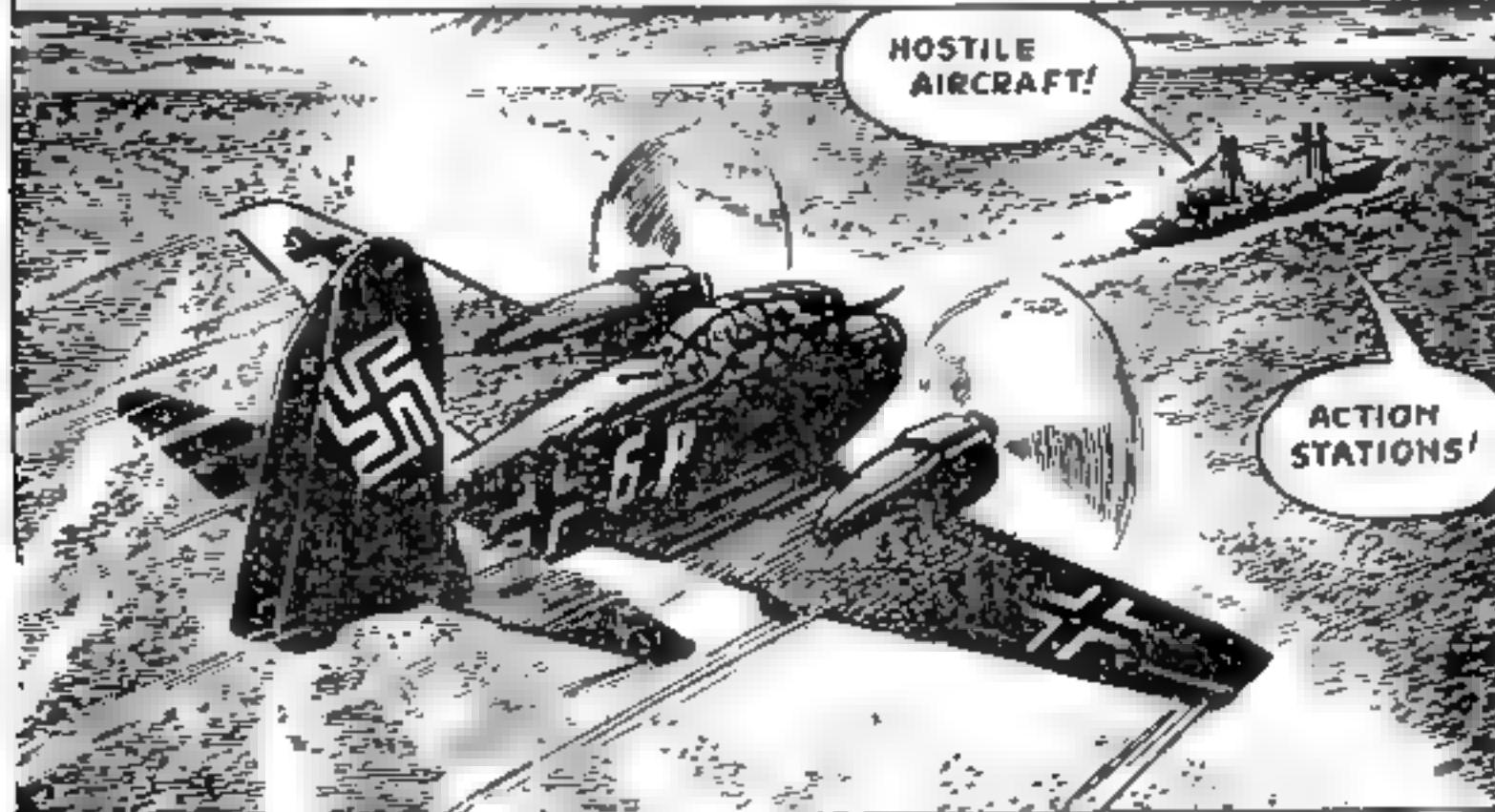
THE SHIP'S DECKS WERE CROWDED, AND THE CREW SAT THE GUN ON A PAIR OF BOOM DEFENCE FLOATS, HUGE STEEL WATERTIGHT BOXES . . .



HEFTY HOPWOOD TRIED OUT THE GUN'S MOVEMENTS AND FOUND LUCY WORKING EFFICIENTLY . . .



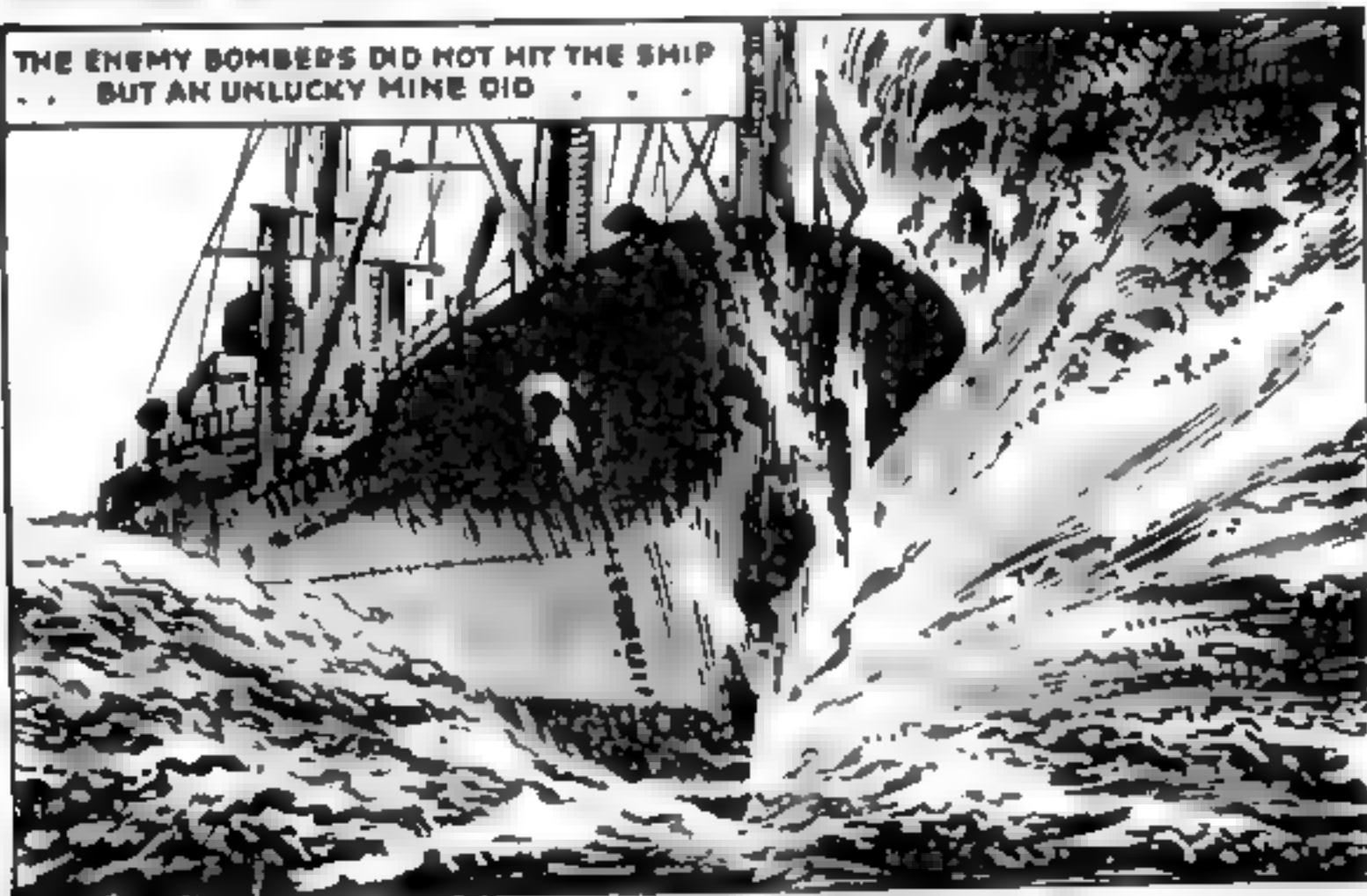
AT DARK, CHANNING PUT TO SEA AND LAID A COURSE FOR ALEXANDRIA. THE FIRST DAY WAS MERCIFULLY MIST-LADEN AND THEY REMAINED UNSEEN. BUT ON THE SECOND DAY THEIR LUCK GAVE OUT . . .



THE MAZI BOMBERS CAME DIVING OUT OF THE SUN, THEIR BOMBS SENDING UP GREAT FOUNTAINS OF GREEN WATER. THE SHIP'S GUNS SPAT BACK IN DEFiance, AND ADDING HER DEEPER NOTE, LUCY HURLED HER SHELLS INTO THE SKY.



THE ENEMY BOMBERS DID NOT HIT THE SHIP  
... BUT AN UNLUCKY MINE DID . . .



## Road from Tobruk

AS THE STRICKEN VESSEL BEGAN TO SETTLE IN THE WATER, THE MEN TOOK TO THE BOATS OR DROPPED OVERBOARD TO GRAB AT ANYTHING THAT FLOATED . . .



THINKING HIMSELF THE LAST TO LEAVE, LIEUTENANT CHANNING THREW A HASTY LOOK ROUND, AND STARED . . .

GOOD GRIEF, IT'S THAT LITTLE GUNNER . . . AND HE'S NOT MOVING!



# Road from Tobruk

57

WADING OVER THE SEA-WASHED DECK, CHANNING FOUND THE LONE GUNNER PLUNGED IN DEEP GLOOM

COME ALONG, HOPWOOD, YOU HEARD THE ORDER, ABANDON SHIP...

BUT HEFTY MADE NO REPLY. HOW COULD HE, IN THOSE FEW DIRE MOMENTS, EXPLAIN HIS FEELINGS ABOUT LUCY?

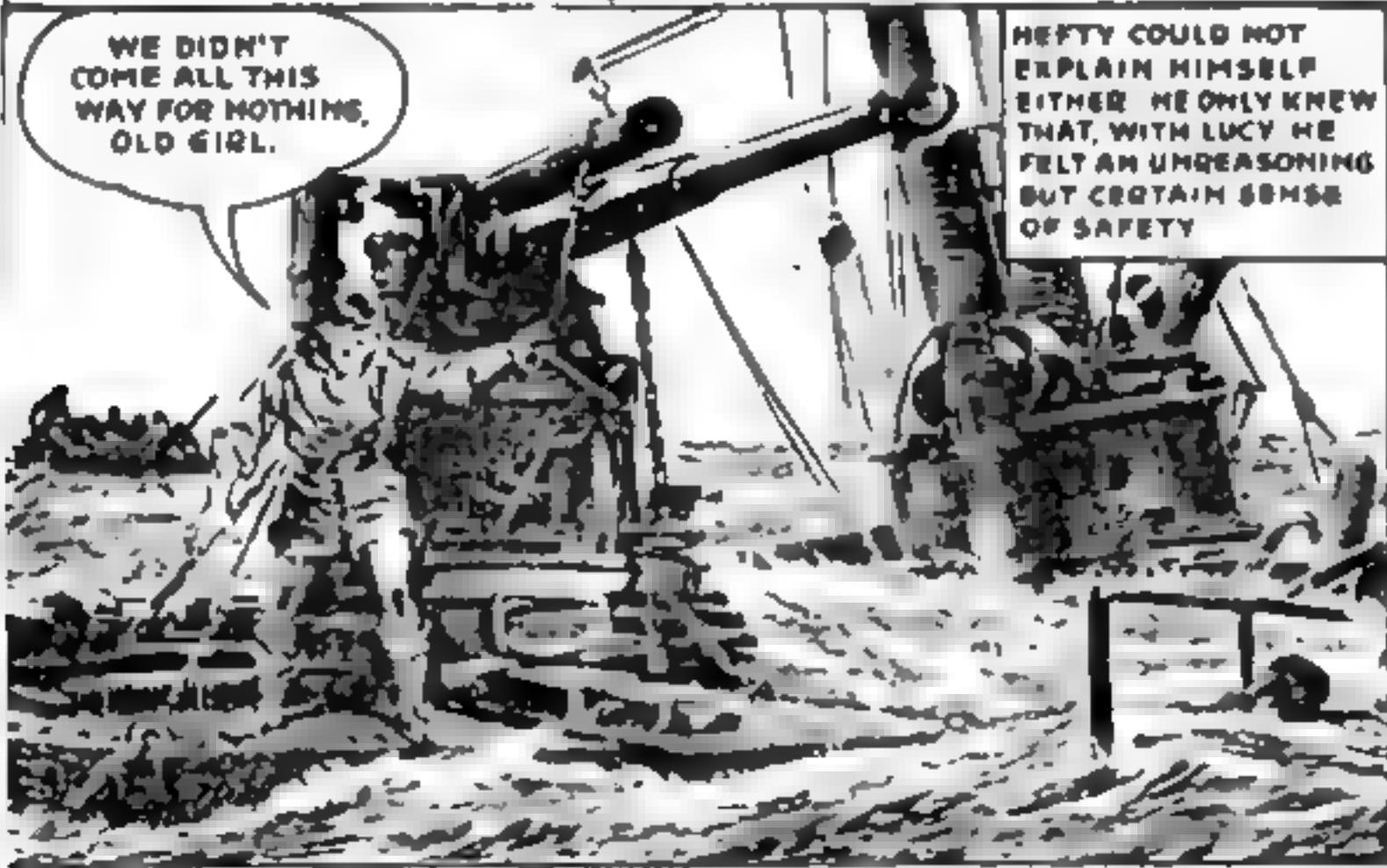
CHANNING ARGUED BUT IT WAS USELESS . . . RELUCTANTLY, HE LEFT TO CLIMB ABOARD THE LAST BOAT . . .

THAT GUNNER MUST HAVE GONE OFF HIS ROCKER . . .

## Road from Tobruk

WE DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY FOR NOTHING, OLD GIRL.

HEFTY COULD NOT EXPLAIN HIMSELF EITHER. HE ONLY KNEW THAT, WITH LUCY HE FELT AN UNREASONING BUT CERTAIN SENSE OF SAFETY.



SOMEHOW, WHEN THE SHIP SANK FROM UNDER HIM, HEFTY WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN HE AND THE GUN STAYED AFLOAT, BUOYED UP BY THE HUGE WATER-TIGHT BOOM FLOATS.

GOOD GIRL, LUCY. TAKE IT STEADY!



OTHERS IN THE WATER SOUGHT A HANDHOLD ON HEFTY'S STRANGE RAFT . . . BUT THEY SOON WENT BACK TO THEIR FLOATING DEBRIS . . .

I DON'T  
TRUST THAT  
CRAZY GUN.

IT'LL TIP  
AND SINK ANY  
SECOND.



THEN DARKNESS ENGULFED THEM ALL AND THEY DRIFTED THEIR DIFFERENT WAYS. BY MORNING, HEFTY COULD SEE NOTHING ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATER AND FOR THE FIRST TIME HE FELT THE COLD FINGER OF DOUBT.



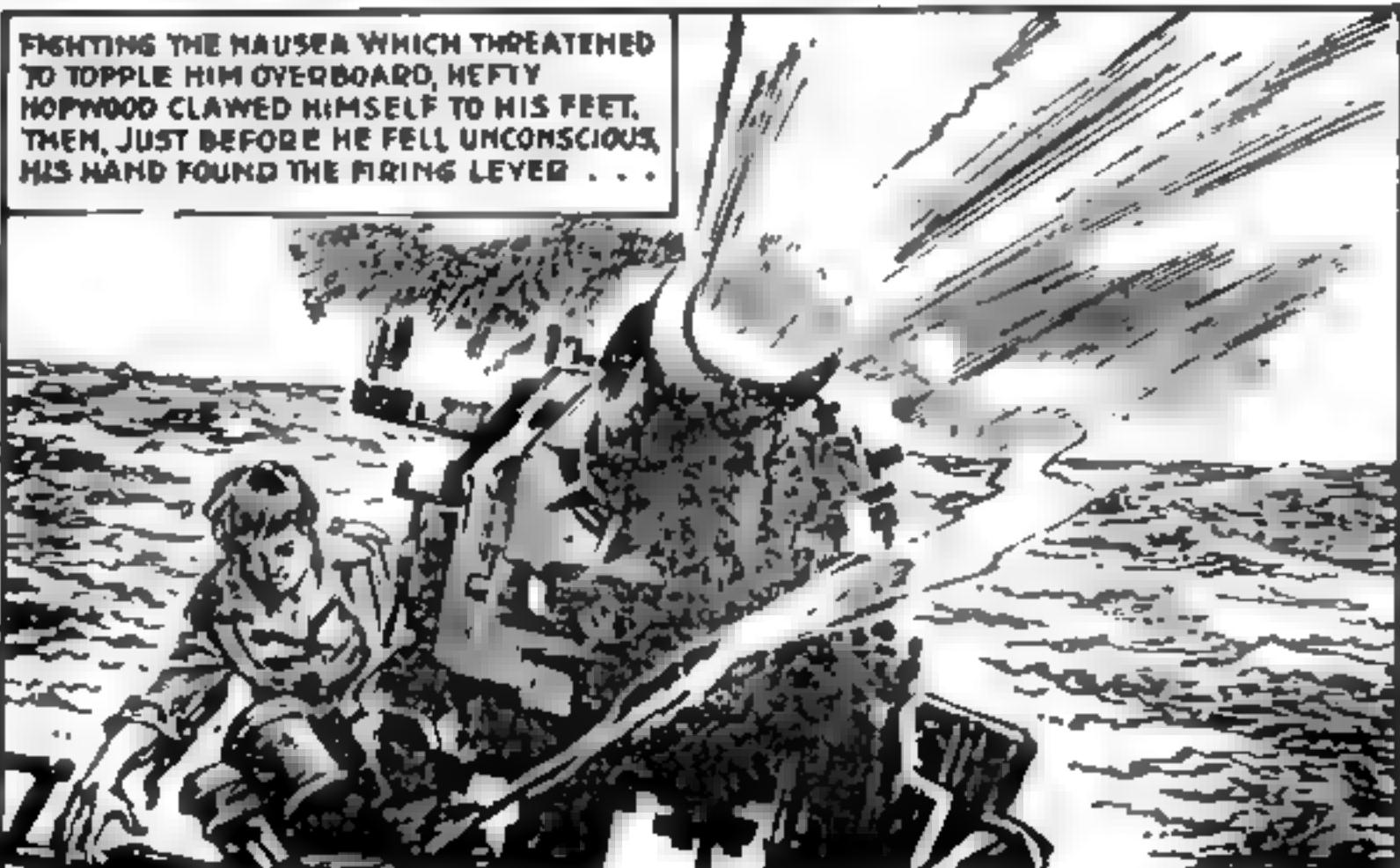
THAT NIGHT HE WAS ILL FROM EXPOSURE. BY THE NEXT AFTERNOON HE WAS HEARING DELIRIUM. WOULD THERE BE NO RESCUE?



THEM FLOATING  
THROUGH HIS  
ILLUSIONS CAME  
THE PERSISTENT  
DROME OF AN  
AIRCRAFT ENGINE.  
HIS SIGHT  
BLURRED, HEFTY  
COULD JUST MAKE  
OUT THE FAMILIAR  
BLACK CROSSES.  
ONE LAST YAIN  
HOPE CAME TO  
HIM . . .



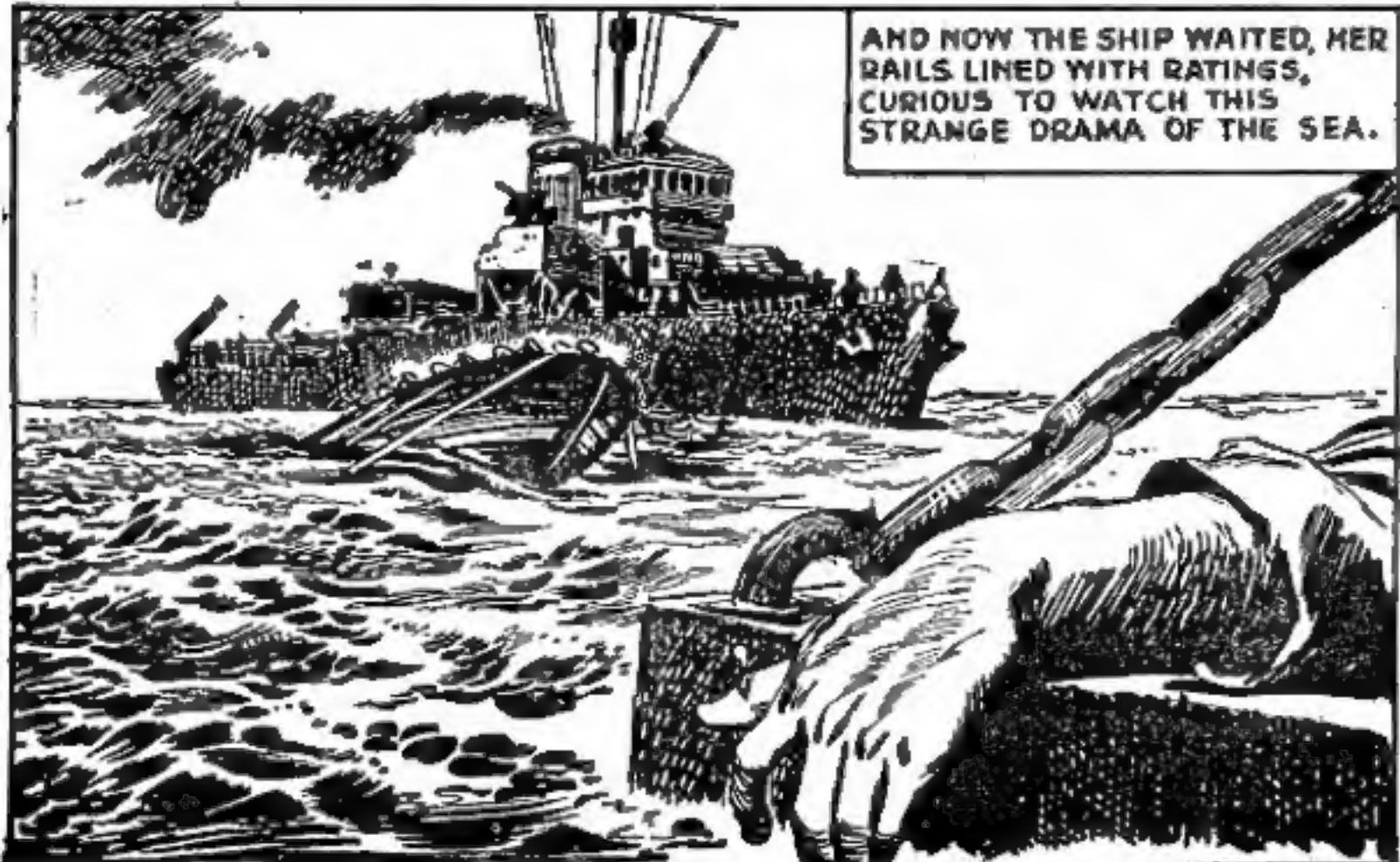
FIGHTING THE NAUSEA WHICH THREATENED  
TO TOPPLE HIM OVERBOARD, HEFTY  
HOPWOOD CLAWED HIMSELF TO HIS FEET.  
THEN, JUST BEFORE HE FELL UNCONSCIOUS,  
HIS HAND FOUND THE FIRING LEVER . . .



IT WAS THIS SINGLE SHELL, THIS LAST DESPERATE SIGNAL OF A DYING MAN, THAT SAVED A SHIP FROM CERTAIN DESTRUCTION AND MERCIFULLY CAUGHT THE EYE OF A MINESEEEPER'S LOOK-OUT...



AND NOW THE SHIP WAITED, HER RAILS LINED WITH RATINGS, CURIOUS TO WATCH THIS STRANGE DRAMA OF THE SEA.



## Road from Tobruk

THEY WATCHED AS THAT LONE, LIMP FIGURE WAS PICKED OFF THE RAFT AND LIFTED INTO THE BOAT . . . .

HE'S STILL ALIVE . . . EASY NOW.



GENTLY THEY CARRIED GUNNER HOPWOOD ABOARD THE SHIP HE HAD SAVED. IT WAS THE END OF THE JOURNEY FOR A MAN WHO HAD SLOGGED AND FOUGHT HIS WAY ACROSS THE DESERT . . . TO FIND THE TRUE RESERVES OF GRIT AND DETERMINATION WHICH LAY WITHIN HIM . . .

THE LAD SEEMS TO BE COMING ROUND, MISTER CLARKE. I'LL BET HE'S GOT A TALE TO TELL . . .



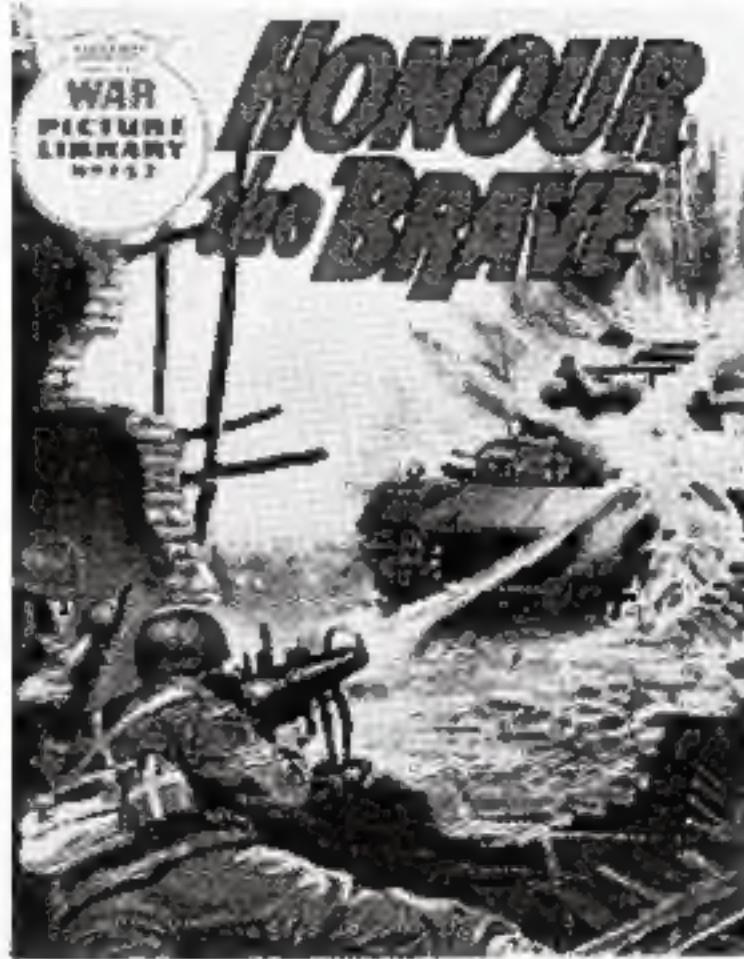
. . . IT WAS THE STORY OF A MAN . . . AND OF A GUN. AND HOW THE GUN, AS IF IT KNEW THAT ITS LAST JOB WAS DONE, BEGAN TO SINK SLOWLY BEHINER THE WAVES OF THE BLUE MEDITERRANEAN . . .

ALSO ON SALE NOW

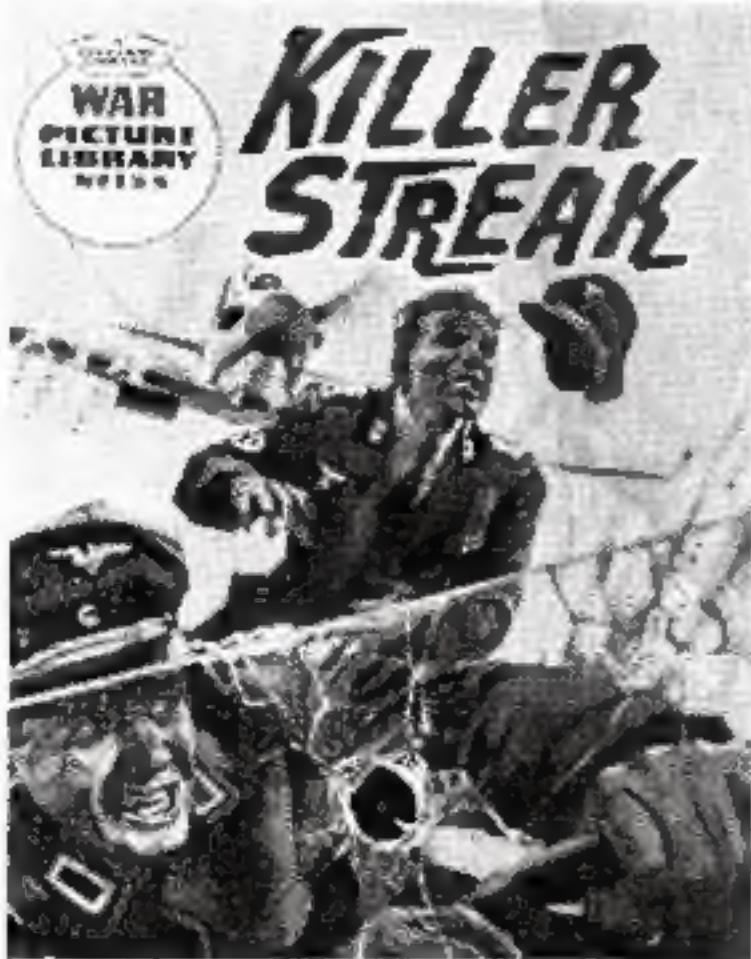
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